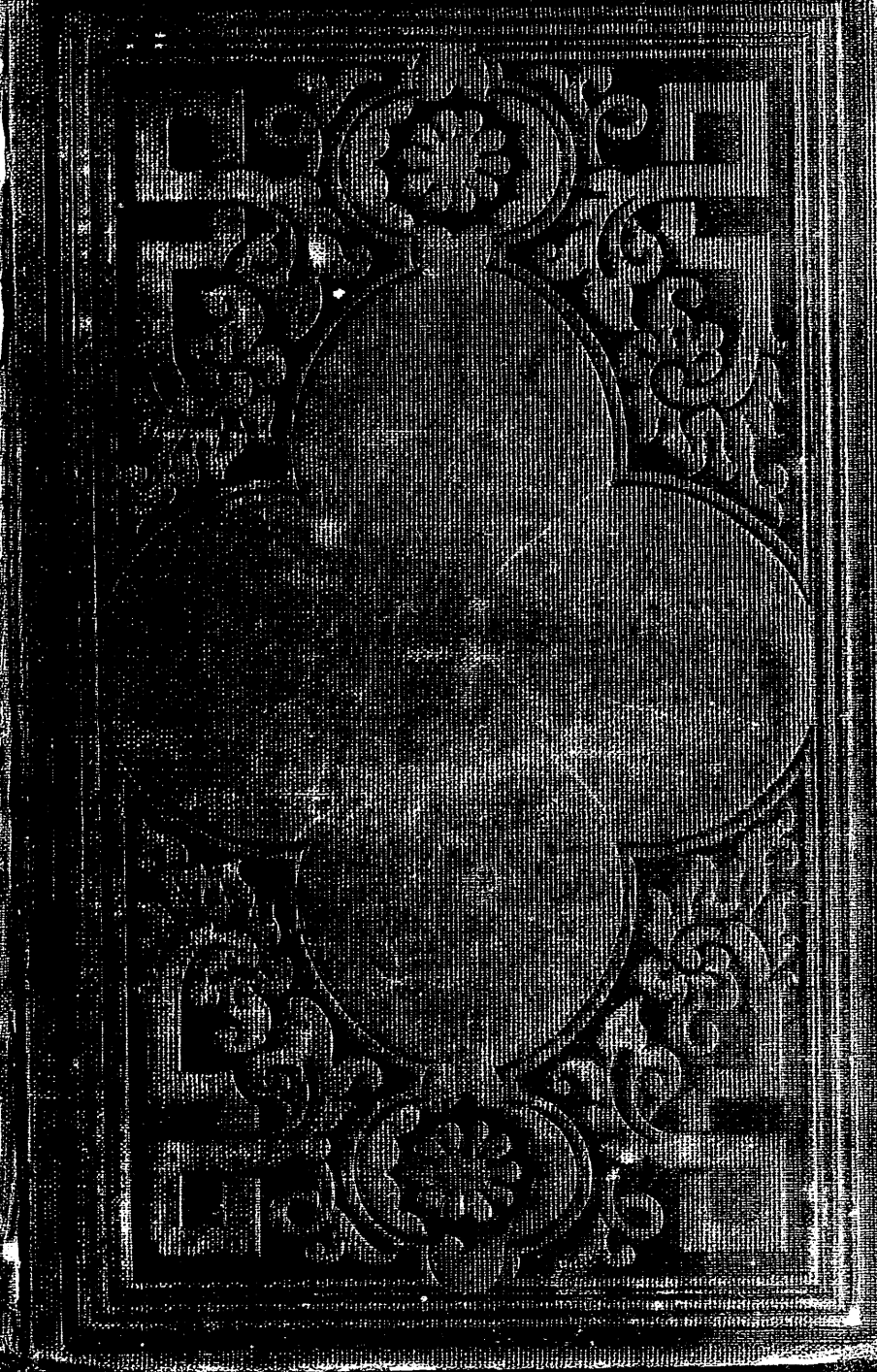




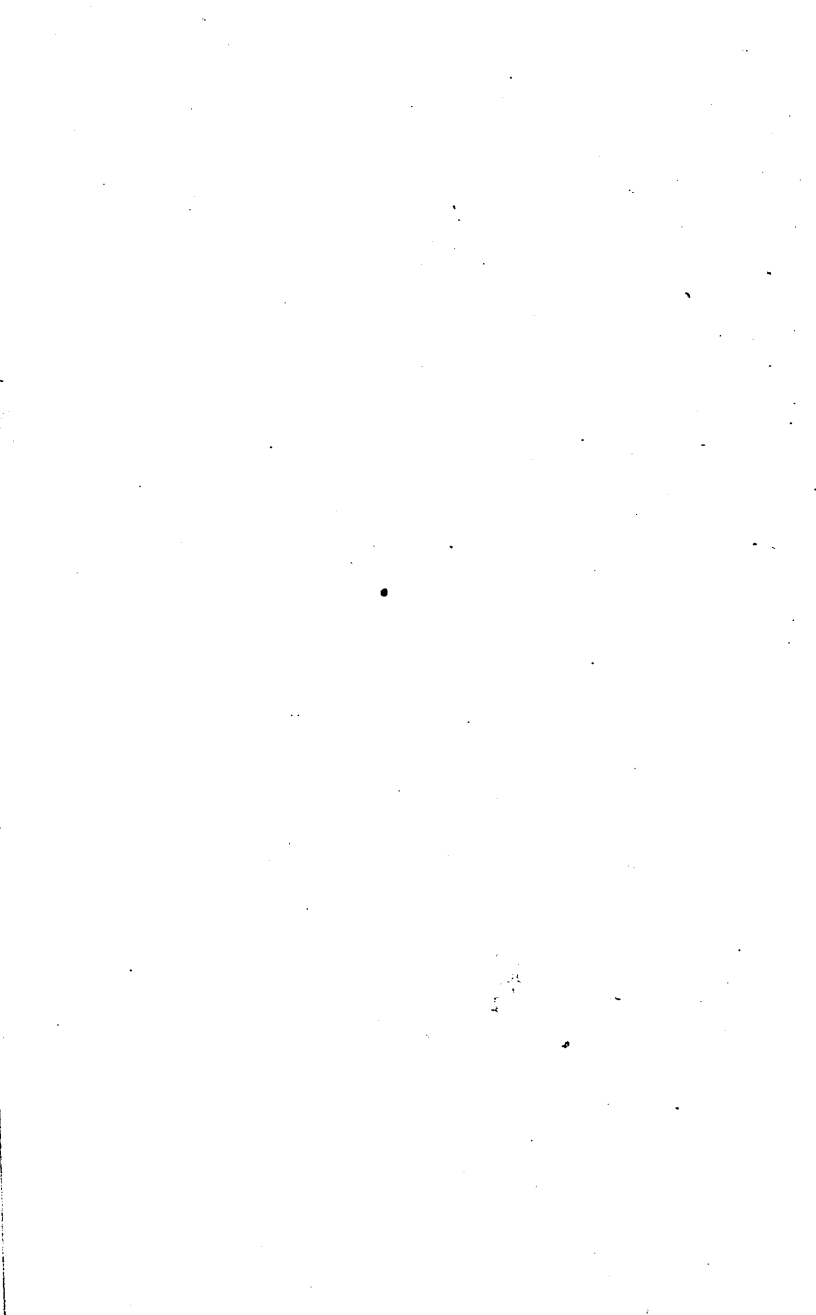
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Fletcher, John William

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

AS TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE.

An Essay

CONTAINING THE SUBSTANCE OF

MR. FLETCHER'S LAST CHECK TO
ANTINOMIANISM.

WITH

ADDITIONS AND APPENDIXES.

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL D. AKIN, A.M.

"BE YE PERFECT."—JESUS CHRIST.

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TO

The Lovers of Holiness,

OF WHATEVER NAME,

WITH A SINCERE DESIRE TO PROMOTE

UNITY OF FAITH

AND INCREASE OF LOVE,

THIS WORK

IS PRAYERFULLY DEDICATED.



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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THOSE acquainted with the theological controversies of the last century are aware that the "Checks to Antinomianism" originated in the struggles attending the rise of Methodism. Like all such controversies, this called forth many allusions, personal and miscellaneous, possessing no general interest; and dictated an arrangement of the parts of the argument, not best suited to a lucid, perspicuous presentation of the subject. Several arguments of only a local character concern us but little; and so of an entire section which presents the teachings of the Church of England on this subject. The diffuseness of Mr. Fletcher's style, generally remarkable for its perspicuity, sometimes obscures his meaning. Moreover, the discussion of the subject since his day has drawn out additional arguments, and elicited new views; some of which, it will not be denied, shed light on important points which seem to have presented difficulties to the mind of this great contender for the faith.

The desire to see his inimitable argument before the public, freed from these defects, and in a cheap, portable form, is what prompted the preparation of the present volume. Complete success is not claimed; the verdict of the candid reader will decide how nearly it has been attained.

These pages will be found to contain the entire argument of Mr. Fletcher—with the exceptions above indicated—usually in his own language, though not unfrequently abbreviated for the sake of brevity or perspicuity; and much additional matter, original and selected, has been introduced, which is distinguished from the matter of the “Checks” by brackets before and after. Quotations introduced by the reviser are enclosed by both brackets and quotation marks.

The necessity for such a work as this, is, perhaps, sufficiently apparent. Amidst the multiplicity of books that of late years have issued on this subject, none have presented that clearness and force peculiar to Mr. Fletcher's work. Many have contained dogmas tainted with error. A theory seems to have gained some ground—not, perhaps, in a verbal announcement, yet in its practical outworkings—that this exalted state so lifts us above the cares of this life, that we are permitted, nay, at times required, to disregard the claims of family duty and social relationship,

instead of calling to a more earnest and spiritual fulfilment. Many of the professed friends of this doctrine have so grossly misconceived and consequently misrepresented it, and its theoretical enemies have so misstated and perverted it, that it is thought best to guard against a more general extension of these pernicious influences. Hence, a correct, sharply defined presentation of the Bible teachings on this subject, and of their practical operations, such as we humbly trust is contained in this volume, has been a considerable desideratum. Again, a spirit of earnest inquiry on this subject is being aroused. A deeper interest is gaining hold on the heart of the Church. A restoration of Fletcher's clear and powerful work is needed to direct the channel in which this current shall flow; to deepen and widen the gathering stream; and to give a correct, scriptural exposition of the doctrine.

We opine that the candid evangelical Christian, whatever may be the type of his theological theory, will find that his views harmonize with most that he may meet with in these pages. The main difference, we are persuaded, in the opinions of this class of Christians is in their definitions of the words "perfection" and "sin," and their cognates. These being settled, little room remains for controversy.

That this revival of Fletcher's incomparable writings may help to bring about a closer union of sentiment among true Christians, and may prove adequate to aid greatly in the spread of *scriptural* holiness over these lands, and may be the means of presenting many perfect in the day of Jesus Christ, is the earnest hope and fervent prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

HARDINSBURG, KY., November 1, 1859.

PREFACE TO THE "LAST CHECK."

"SINCERE obedience, as a condition, will lead unavoidably up to perfect obedience." Though this has been urged as an argument against our views of the gospel, it is one of the reasons by which we defend them, and perhaps the strongest of all; for our doctrine leads as naturally to holiness and perfect obedience, as that of our opponents does to sin and imperfection. If the streams of their doctrine never stop until they have carried men into a sea of indwelling sin, where they are left to contend with waves of immorality or with billows of corruption all the days of their life, it is evident that our doctrine, which is the very reverse of theirs, must take us to a sea of indwelling holiness, where we calmly outride all the storms which Satan raised to destroy Job's perfection, and where all our pursuing corruptions are as much destroyed as the Egyptians were in the Red Sea.

Truth, like Moses's rod, is all of a piece; and so is the serpent which truth destroys. The error which we attack is possessed of the venomous,

mortal sting of indwelling sin. On the rod with which we defend ourselves against that smooth, biting error, may be found the pearl of great price, the invaluable diamond of Christian perfection. Shall the sting be preserved, or the jewel recovered? We contend for the latter.

The following are the reasons why we brand this doctrine as Antinomian :

1. All who represent Christian believers as lawless—first, by denying that Christ's law is a rule of judgment which absolutely requires our own personal obedience; secondly, by representing this law as a mere rule of life; and, thirdly, by insinuating that this rule of life is, after all, absolutely impracticable: that a perfect fulfilment of it is not expected from any believer; that there never was a Christian who lived one day without breaking it; and that believers can be eternally saved merely because Christ kept it for them—all these, I say, who hold this solifidian doctrine concerning Christ's law, are Antinomians, with a witness; that is, they are *lawless* Christians in principle, if not in practice. Now, all those who attack the doctrine which we maintain, are under this three-fold error concerning Christ's law, and, therefore, they are all Antinomians, that is, lawless in principle, though many of them, we are persuaded, are not so in practice: the fear of God causing in them

a happy inconsistency between their legal conduct and their lawless tenets.

2. If those who plead for the breaking of Christ's law, by the necessary indwelling of a revengeful thought, only for one week or one day, are bare-faced Antinomians, what shall we say of the men who, on various pretences, plead for the necessary indwelling of all manner of corruption during the term of life? Can it be said that these men are free from the plague of Antinomianism?

3. And last. When the reader comes to that chapter in which are produced and answered the arguments by which the ministers of the imperfect gospel defend the continuance of indwelling sin in all believers until death, he will find that their strongest reasons are the very same that the lawless apostates and most daring renegades daily produce, when they plead for their continuance in drunkenness, lying, and every form of gross immorality; and if these immoral gossellers deserve the name of gross Antinomians, why should not the moral men who hold their loose principles, and publicly recommend them as "doctrines of grace," deserve the name of refined Antinomians? May not a silk-weaver, who softly works a piece of taffeta, be as justly called a weaver as the man who weaves the coarsest sackcloth?

From these considerations, we conclude: 1.

There is no medium between pleading for the continuance of indwelling sin, and pleading for the continuance of heart-Antinomianism. And, 2. All who attack the doctrine of sinless perfection deserve, when they do so, the name of advocates for sin, better than the name of gospel ministers and preachers of righteousness. I am conscious that this twofold conclusion wounds, in the tenderest part, some of my dear, mistaken brethren in the ministry, whom, on various accounts, I highly honor in the Lord. Nevertheless, conscience obliges me to publish it, lest any of my readers, or any of those whom they may warn, should be led into Antinomianism through the mistakes of those popular preachers; for the interests of truth, the honor of Christ's holy religion, and the welfare of precious souls, are, and ought to be, to me and to every Christian, far dearer than the credit of some good, injudicious men, who inadvertently undermine the cause of godliness; thinking to do God service by stretching forth a solifidian hand to uphold the ark of gospel truth.

Theirs is a dangerous mistake, which is inseparably connected with the doctrine of a purgatory little better than that of the Papists. For it is evident that if we cannot be purged from the remains of sin in this life, we must be purged from them in death, or after death, or we must be ban-

ished for ever from God's presence; for reason and Scripture jointly depose that nothing unholy or unclean shall enter the heavenly Jerusalem.

If we understand by *purgatory* the manner in which souls still polluted with the remains of sin are or may be *purged* from these remains, that they may see a holy God, and dwell with him for ever, the question, "Which is the true purgatory?" is by no means frivolous, for it is the grand inquiry, "How shall I be eternally saved?" proposed in different expressions.

There are four opinions concerning purgatory, or the purgation of the soul from the remains of sin. The wildest is that of the heathens, who supposed "that those who depart this life with moral filth cleaving to them are purified by being hanged out to sharp, cutting winds; by being plunged into a deep, impetuous whirlpool; or by being thrown into a refining fire in some Tartarean region."

The second opinion is that of the Romanists, who teach that such souls are completely sanctified by the virtue of Christ's blood, *and* the sharp operation of a penal, temporary fire in the suburbs of hell.

The third opinion is that of the opponents of this doctrine which we support; who think that the stroke of death must absolutely be joined with

Christ's blood and Spirit, and with our faith, to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, and to kill the inbred man of sin.

The last sentiment is that which teaches that there is no other purgatory but "Christ's blood—steadfast, perfect faith, and the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, cleansing the thoughts of our hearts, that we may perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his holy name. The only purgatory wherein we must trust to be saved is the death and blood of Christ, which if we apprehend with a true and saving faith, it purgeth and cleanseth us from all sins. 'The blood of Christ,' says St. John, 'hath cleansed us from all sin.' 'The blood of Christ,' says St. Paul, 'hath purged our consciences from dead works to serve the living God,' etc. This, then, is the purgatory wherein all Christian men put their trust and confidence."

The Scripture doctrine of purgatory is vindicated, and the new-fangled doctrine of a death-purgatory is exploded, in the following pages; wherein I endeavor to defend the "glorious liberty of the children of God," and to attack the false liberty of those who, while they promise liberty to others in Christ, are themselves—doctrinally, at least—the "servants of corruption," pleading hard for the indwelling of sin in our hearts so long as we live, and thinking it almost blasphemous to assert that

Christ's blood, fully applied by the Spirit, through a steadfast faith, can radically "cleanse us from all sin," without the least assistance from the arrows or sweats of death.

Reader, I plead for the most precious liberty in the world—heart-liberty—for liberty from the most galling of all yokes—the yoke of heart-corruption. Let not thy prejudices turn a deaf ear to the important plea. If thou, candidly, believingly, and practically receive the "truth as it is in Jesus, it shall make thee free, and thou shalt be free indeed."



CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION SCRIPTURALLY DEFINED.

MOST of the controversies which arise between men who fear God, spring from the hurry with which some of them find fault with what they have not yet examined, and speak evil of what they do not understand. Why do so many good people attack the doctrine for which we contend? Is it because they are sworn enemies to righteousness, and zealous protectors of iniquity? Not at all. The grand reason, next to their prejudice, is their inattention to the question, and to the arguments by which our sentiments are supported. We think that if they understood our doctrine, they would no more pour contempt upon it than upon the oracles of God. If producing light is the best method of opposing darkness, setting the doctrine of Christian perfection in its proper point of view will be the best method of opposing the doctrines

of Christian imperfection and of a death-purgatory. Begin we, then, by taking a view of our Jerusalem and her perfection.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION! Why should the harmless phrase offend? *Perfection!* Why should that lovely word frighten us? Is it not common and plain? Is it wrong to observe that fruit *grown to maturity* is in its perfection? We use the word perfection in exactly the same sense; giving that name to the maturity of grace peculiar to established believers under their respective dispensations; and if this be an error, we are led into it by the sacred writers, who use the word *perfection* as well as we. It occurs, with all its derivatives, as frequently as most words in the Scriptures, and not seldom in the very same sense in which we take it. Now, the declaration of our Lord does not permit us to renounce the word nor the thing: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father." Now, the words of my motto, "Be ye perfect," being Christ's own words, we dare no more be ashamed of, than we dare desire him to be ashamed of us in the great day.

We give the name of Christian perfection to that maturity of grace and holiness which established believers attain under the Christian dispensation;

and thus we distinguish that maturity of grace, both from the ripeness of grace which belongs to the dispensation of the Jews below us, and from the ripeness of glory which belongs to the departed saints above us. [We also distinguish the perfection of men's moral faculties from that of the physical and intellectual. A man of feeble intellect may love and serve God as sincerely, as wholly as the greatest mind; an invalid at the gate of the grave, as acceptably as the most robust in health and strength.] Hence, it appears that by Christian perfection we mean nothing but the cluster and maturity of the graces which compose the Christian character in the Church militant. c

In other words, Christian perfection is a spiritual constellation, made up of these gracious stars: perfect repentance, perfect faith, perfect humility, perfect meekness, perfect self-denial, perfect resignation, perfect charity for our visible enemies, as well as for our earthly relations; and, above all, perfect love for our invisible God, through the explicit knowledge of our Mediator, Jesus Christ. And as this last star is always accompanied by the others, as Jupiter by his satellites, we frequently use, as St. John, the phrase "perfect love," instead of perfection; understanding by it the pure love of God shed abroad in the heart of established believers by the Holy Ghost, which is abundantly

given unto them under the fulness of the Christian dispensation.

If asked whether we contend for a *sinless* perfection, we reply that, properly understood, we do. Our Saviour saith, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matt. xxii. 37-40. And Paul says: "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. xiii. 10. See verses 8, 9; also, Gal. v. 14, and 1 Tim. i. 5. Thus we see that the law is perfectly fulfilled when all the actions are governed by the spirit of love to God; and we contend for a perfection in which the love of God is so "shed abroad in our hearts" that it controls all the actions and feelings, and "sin has no dominion over us." Rom. vi. 14.

In these views we are supported by the *sober* sentiments of the more pious portion of those who, at other times, by tongue and by pen, oppose them. "If love be sincere," says pious Mr. Henry, "it is accepted as the fulfilling of the law. Surely we serve a good Master that has summed up all our duty in one word, and that a short word, and a sweet word, *love*, the beauty and the harmony of the universe. Loving and being loved is all the

pleasure, joy, and happiness of an intelligent being. God is love, and love is his image upon the soul. Where it is, the soul is well moulded, and the heart is fitted for every good work." "It is well for us that by virtue of the covenant of grace, upon the score of Christ's righteousness, sincerity is accepted as our gospel perfection." Exposition on Rom. xiii. 10, and Gen. vi. 2.

Bishop Hopkins is of exactly the same mind. "Consider," says he, "for your encouragement, that this is not so much the absolute and legal perfection of the work as the perfection of the worker, that is, the perfection of the heart, which is looked at and rewarded by God. It is not so much what our works are, as what our heart is, that God looks at and rewards."

Archbishop Leighton pleads also for the perfection which we maintain. We give his own words, abridged: "By obedience, sanctification is here intimated. It signifies both habitual and actual obedience, renovation of the heart, and conformity to the Divine will. This obedience is universal three manner of ways: 1. In the subject. It is not in the tongue alone, or in the hand, etc., but has its root in the heart. 2. In the object. It embraces the whole law. 3. In its duration. The whole man is subjected to the whole law, and that constantly." Again he says: "To be subject to

God is truer happiness than to command the whole world. Pure love reckons thus, though no further reward were to follow, obedience to God (the perfection of his creature and its very happiness) carries its full recompense in its own bosom. Yea, love delights most in the hardest services. It is love to him, indeed, to love the labor of love, and the service of it; and that, not so much because it leads to rest, and ends in it, but because it is service to Him whom we love. According as love is, so is the soul; it is made like, yea, it is made one with that which it loves. By the love of God it is made divine, is one with him." Archbishop Leighton's Commentary on St. Peter, p. 15, etc. Where has the most ardent advocate of this doctrine exceeded these descriptions of Christian perfection?

We doubt not, as a reasonable father never requires of his child who is only ten years old the work of one who is thirty, that our Heavenly Father never expects of us, in our debilitated state, the obedience of immortal Adam in Paradise, nor the uninterrupted worship of sleepless angels in heaven. We are persuaded, therefore, that, for Christ's sake, he is pleased with an humble obedience to our present light, and a loving exertion of our present powers, accepting our services "according to what we have, and not according to what we

have not." Nor dare we call that loving exertion of our present powers, *sin*; lest, by doing so, we should contradict the Scriptures, confound sin and obedience, and remove all the landmarks which divide the devil's common from the Lord's vineyard.

To conclude. We believe that although adult, established believers, or perfect Christians, may admit of many involuntary mistakes, errors, and faults, and of many involuntary improprieties of speech and behavior; yet, so long as their will is bent upon doing God's will, so long as they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," so long as they fulfil the law of liberty by pure love, they do not sin according to the gospel; because "sin is the transgression, and love is the fulfilling, of the law." Far, then, from thinking that there is any absurdity in saying daily, "Vouchsafe to keep me this day without sin," we doubt not but, in believers "who walk in the light as Christ is in the light," that deep petition is answered, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled; and, of consequence, a sinless perfection, as we have explained it, is daily experienced.

So then, as we are to be judged by the law of God, we maintain not only that it may, but also that it must be kept; and that it is actually kept by established believers. Nor do we think it

objectionable to hear an adult believer say, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death; for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. viii. 2, etc.

CHAPTER II.

MISTAKES AS TO WHAT IS SINFUL, CORRECTED.

[MUCH of the fog that has been made to envelop the doctrine of Christian perfection, so as to obscure it to the eyes of prejudiced opposers, is owing, we doubt not, to the want of a definite understanding of what is sinful, and what is not; and their confounding of things which are totally distinct, is what constitutes the foundation of some of their most serious objections to the glorious doctrine for which we contend.

We present the reader with some of those things which have been involved in this confusion, and from which we hope, by bringing them under the united rays of reason and revelation, to clear away the mist that bedims them.]

I. They confound peccability with sin—the power of sinning with the actual use of that power. And so long as they suppose that a bare natural capacity to sin is either original sin or an evil propensity, we do not wonder at their believ-

ing that original sin or evil propensities must remain in our hearts till death removes us from this tempting world. But on what argument do they found this notion? Did not God create angels and men peccable? Or, in other terms, did he not endue them with power to sin or not to sin, to obey or to disobey, as they pleased? Did not the event show that they had this tremendous power? But would it not be blasphemous to assert that God created them full of indwelling sin and evil propensities? If an adult believer yields to temptation and falls into sin, as our first parents did, is it a proof that he never was cleansed from inbred sin? If sinning necessarily demonstrates that the heart was always teeming with depravity, will it not follow that Adam and Eve were tainted with sin before their will began to decline from original righteousness? Is it not, however, indubitable, from the nature of God, from Scripture, and from sad experience, that after having been created sinless, in God's image and holy likeness, our first parents, as well as some angels, "were drawn away by their own self-conceited lusts," and became evil by the power of their own free agency? Is it reasonable to think that the most holy Christians, so long as the day of their visitation and probation lasts in this tempting wilderness, are in that respect above Adam in

Paradise, and above angels in heaven? And may we not conclude that as Satan and Adam insensibly fell into sin, the one from the height of his celestial perfection, and the other from the summit of his Paradisiacal excellence, without any previous bias inclining them to corruption, so may those believers whose hearts have been completely purified by faith gradually depart from the faith, and fall so low as to count the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing?

II. They confound innocent infirmities with sins, and we proceed to show that the distinction between them is truly scriptural.

1. Moses evidently makes the distinction, for he punished the daring Sabbath-breaker and the rebel with death; while upon such as accidentally contracted some involuntary pollution, he inflicted no other punishment than separation from the congregation till evening; and this made a rational and evangelical distinction between the "spot of God's children" and that of the "perverse and crooked generation." Deut. xxxii. 5.

2. Christ, the merciful Mediator, teaches this, no less than stern Moses; for he makes a wide difference between the involuntary drowsiness of the eleven disciples in Gethsemane, and the malicious watching of the traitor Judas. Of the one he said: "It would be good for that man if he had

never been born ;” of the other : “ The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

3. Paul writes to Timothy : “ Them that sin rebuke before all, that others may also fear.” 1 Tim. v. 20. “ We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.” Rom. xv. 1. Here are two plain commands : the first, not to bear with sins ; and the second, to bear with infirmities ; and this difference is discoverable to others, and certainly much more to ourselves.

4. St. Paul will hardly be supposed to glory in his sins, yet he writes : “ Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in mine infirmities.” 2 Cor. xii. 9.

5. A pious man will hardly indulge the blasphemous thought that the Holy Spirit helps our sins ; yet it is written that “ The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.” Rom. viii. 26.

6. According to this showing, was not our Saviour himself a sinner ? For had he not his innocent infirmities too ? Did he not shudder at the prospect of the cup of trembling ? Needed he not the “ strengthening support of an angel in the garden of Gethsemane ?” Did he not offer up prayers, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save him from death ? Was he not heard in that he *feared* ? Heb. v. 7. Did he not innocently cry out upon the cross, “ My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ?” When,

therefore, our opponents confound sin with natural, innocent infirmities, do they not fix a blot upon the immaculate character of Him who could say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"

Having, by these arguments, demonstrated that there is a real difference between sins and infirmities; as it is a matter of importance, we will next point out that difference. It is plainly fixed by those great "commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets." Whatever is actuated by love to God cannot be sinful, for "love is the fulfilling of the law." Whatever is contrary to the universal love required by the law is manifestly sinful. An infirmity—considering it with the errors which it occasions—is consistent with pure love to God and man; but a sin is inconsistent with that love. An infirmity is free from guile, and has its root in the physical or intellectual part of our nature; but sin is attended with guile, and has its root in the moral part—springing either from the habitual corruption of our hearts, or from the momentary perversion of our tempers. An infirmity unavoidably results from our unhappy circumstances, and from the necessary infelicities of our present state; but a sin flows from the avoidable and perverse choice of our own will. An infirmity has its foundation in an involuntary want of power; and a sin, in the wilful abuse of

the present light and power that we have. The one arises from involuntary ignorance and weakness, and is always attended with a good meaning—a meaning unmixed with any bad design or wicked prejudice; but the other has its source in voluntary perverseness and presumption, and is always attended by a meaning altogether bad; or, at least, by a good meaning founded on wicked prejudices.

[That there may be no room for mistake, we enter into a more minute consideration of this important question.

III. The opposers of this doctrine have imagined that our Heavenly Father requires of us an amount, if not a kind, of obedience incommensurate with our capacities. But we contend, not for the amount of obedience which we might have rendered if our nature had never fallen—this, truly, were impossible—but for the full obedience of our present powers; as the Lord spake by Moses, Deut. x. 12: “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes which I command thee this day for thy good?”—that is, most evidently, with all thy soul as it is at present, with all thy present powers,

however heretofore enfeebled by any cause; and not with such powers as thou hast not, but mightest have had, if thou hadst never sinned.] But further. Does not St. Paul's rule hold good in spirituals as well as in temporals: "It is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what a man hath not." Does our Lord really require more of believers than they can actually do through his grace? Would it not be far less absurd to say that the legislative power of the State makes laws which no citizen can possibly keep? And St. James assures us that Christ's law of liberty is that by which we shall stand or fall in the judgment: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." And when his followers observe it to the best of their ability, does he not see some perfection in their works, insignificant as they may be? "Remove this immense heap of stones," says an indulgent father to his children, "and be diligent according to your strength." While the eldest, a strong man, removes rocks, the youngest, a little child, is as cheerfully busy as the rest, in carrying sand and pebbles. Now, may not this childlike obedience be as perfect in its degree, and consequently as acceptable to his parents, as the manly obedience of the elder brother? Nay, though he does next to nothing, may not his endeavors, if

they are more cordial, excite a smile of superior approbation from his loving father, who looks at the disposition of the heart more than at the appearance of the work? And was it not according to this rule of perfection that Christ testified that the poor widow, who had given but two mites, had, nevertheless, cast more into the treasury than all the rich, though they had cast in much? because, our Lord himself being judge, she had given all that she had. Nor could she give, nor did God require, more than her all. And when she thus heartily gave her all, did she not do a perfect work?

2. But again. This confounding of sin with incapacity to do all we wish, includes the separate "spirits of just men made perfect;" also angels and the archangel. For which one of them would not praise and serve God more perfectly than they are able to do with their limited powers? Do not those spirits cry unto God from beneath the altar, for the "avenging of the blood of the martyrs," and for persecutions to cease? And though they have pleaded night and day for ages, have they yet fully prevailed? Do the "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation" do all the good to those under their charge that they desire?

3. Is not our Lord himself included in this same

condemnation? Did he, as a *man*, do all the good he would, while he was upon the earth? Did he preach as successfully as his perfect love made him desire? If he had all the success that he desired in the ministry, why did he “look around upon his hearers with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts?” Why did he weep and complain: “How oft would I have gathered you, but ye would not!” Were even his private instructions so much blessed to his own disciples as he could have *wished*? If they were, what meant those strange expostulations: “How is it that ye have no faith? Faithless generation! how long shall I bear with you? Hast thou been so long time with me, Philip, and yet hast not known me? Will ye also go away?”

IV. [Inadvertencies in conduct, which proceed from errors of judgment, have also been classed among sins.] But does a well-meant mistake defile the conscience? If I treat a sincere follower of Christ with unbecoming coldness, and address to him such language as is suitable only to the impenitent, under the persuasion that he is a wicked opposer of the gospel, I have certainly erred in judgment, and in conduct as much; but wherein have I sinned? You inadvertently encourage idleness and drunkenness by giving to an idle, drunken beggar who imposes upon your charity by

plausible lies : is this loving error a sin ? A blundering apothecary sends you arsenic for calomel ; you use it as calomel, and poison your child ; but are you a murderer, if you give the fatal dose in love ? Suppose the tempter had secretly mixed some of the forbidden fruit with other fruits that Eve had lawfully gathered for use : would she have sinned if she had inadvertently eaten of it, and given a share to her husband ? Did not Christ himself incidentally stir up the evil he would not, when he gave occasion to the envy and blasphemy of the Pharisees, the scorn of Herod, and the rage of the Jewish mob ? If, then, the supposition which we controvert be true, was he not also a sinner ?

[Such things are, indeed, evidences of the imperfection of our physical and intellectual powers, but not, that we can see, of the moral faculties.

Light is thrown upon this subject by the following quotation :

“In a deliberate action, four distinct elements may be commonly observed. These are—

“1. The outward act.

“2. The conception of the act, of which the external act is the mere bodying forth.

“3. The resolution to carry that conception into effect.

“4. The intention or design with which all this is done.

“Now, the moral quality does not belong to the external act; for the same external act may be performed by two men, while its moral character is, in the two cases, entirely dissimilar.

“Nor does it belong to the conception of the external act, nor to the resolution to carry that conception into effect; for the resolution to perform an action can have no other character than that of the action itself.

“It must, then, reside in the intention.”—*Wayland's Moral Science, Sec. III., p. 30.*]

We go still farther, and ask: May not a man hold many right opinions, and be a perfect lover of the world? And, by parity of reason, may not a man hold many wrong opinions, and be a perfect lover of God? Is it not even possible that a man whose heart is renewed in love, may, through a mistaken humility, or through weakness of understanding, oppose the name of Christian perfection, when he desires and perhaps enjoys the thing?

V. [The natural susceptibilities of our being have been supposed to be, of themselves, sinful; and no wonder that men, under such a persuasion, should believe it impossible to be freed from sin in this life, seeing that to part with these were to part with our nature, with our very existence.

No one, we presume, will go so far as to assert that new powers, passions, and appetites were given to man at or after the fall, or that original ones were destroyed. Their exercise, while man was in a state of innocence, could not have been sinful; and it would, we opine, be very difficult to show that what was sinless then must be sinful now. There is evidently a limit within which the exercise of each of them is wholly right. To assert the contrary is to charge God with making intelligent beings, and endowing them with such faculties as that, in their legitimate exercise, his law must, of necessity, be violated. Might not Adam have been angry at Eve when she had violated the law herself, and was urging him to do so, and yet have been blameless? And why may we not be indignant or angry at sin, as our Saviour was, when we see the law of the Lord trampled under foot by those around us, and still commit no sin? May we not

“Hate the sin with all the heart,
But still the sinner love?”

Again. While we grant that it is wrong to eat what belongs to another against his consent, it certainly cannot be wrong to eat enough of that which belongs to ourselves to supply the temperate wants of our physical frame. And so the

gratification of all the emotions and appetites of our being, within the proper bounds, is equally unblamable.]

If, as has been contended, "the natural desires, appetites, and aversions, which are necessarily excited in the soul, in consequence of its intimate union with the body," be sinful, was not our Lord himself sinful? Do we not read of his sleeping in the ship, while his disciples wrestled with a tempestuous sea? Was he not weary at Jacob's well; hungry in the wilderness; thirsty upon the cross? Did not his holy flesh testify a natural, innocent abhorrence to suffering? Did not his sacred body faint in the garden? Were not his spirits so depressed that he stood in need of the strengthening assistance of an angel? And in his prayer in Gethsemane, did he not manifest a resigned desire to escape from pain and shame? Finally, did he not fulfil the precept, "Be ye angry, and sin not?" If he "was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was tempted in all points like as we are," is it not highly probable that he was not an utter stranger to the other natural appetites and uneasy sensations which are incident to flesh and blood? Is it a sin to feel them? [Is it not rather a virtue totally to deny them, or not gratify them out of the line of duty, or not to indulge them excessively in that line?] If every such desire be indwelling

sin, or the “flesh sinfully lusting against the spirit,” did he not go through the sinful conflict, as well as those whom we call perfect men in Christ? To what absurd conclusions does error conduct us!

VI. [Finally. It is not sinful to be tempted; for our Saviour was “tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin.”

All ought to know at what exact point, under temptation, we begin to sin; as no Christian sins except under such influence.

Temptation is enticement to sin by the presentation of some desirable object that is forbidden. If there be nothing desirable in the object, it cannot tempt. A rough stone lying on the ground amidst a profusion of such objects, cannot be to me a source of temptation, as I perceive nothing about it calculated to excite my desire. On the contrary, it may be an object of temptation, if found to be rich in gold quartz; for then there is something about it to rouse the susceptibilities of my nature. But if fully assured that no one has a better right to it than I, there can be no temptation—since the desire to possess it is not, in this case, inhibited.

Our primeval parents must certainly have perceived that the forbidden fruit was not only “pleasant to the eyes, but good for food, and to be

desired to make one wise;" or they would not even have been tempted to "take of the fruit and eat." But if, when they first saw that there was something in that forbidden object so well calculated to excite pleasure and to arouse desire, they had at once fled from the scene of temptation, and called upon God for assistance, who imagines that they would have felt the desire actually arising in their souls, and thereby have forfeited their original perfection?

The rising of desire to do what is wrong, or the indulgence of such thoughts as we know tend to excite desire of forbidden things, is the exact point where sin begins; and not the thought of sin, "such thought being also in the mind of God;" nor the consciousness that what is prohibited might gratify some of the pressing demands of our nature, and hence be eminently desirable, if there were nothing wrong in its appropriation.]

It is imagined that upon our principles the grace of an adult Christian is like the body of an adult man, which can grow no more. But this consequence flows from their fancy, and not from our doctrine. We exhort the strongest believers to "grow up into Christ in all things;" asserting that there is no holiness and no happiness in heaven—much less upon earth—which does not admit

of growth, except the holiness and happiness of God himself; because, in the very nature of things, a Being absolutely perfect and, in every sense infinite can never have any thing added to him. But infinite additions may be made to beings every way finite, such as glorified saints and holy angels are.

Hence it appears that the comparison which we make between the ripeness of fruit and the maturity of a believer's grace cannot be carried into an exact parallel, [but is, in this respect, more like the tree. From the time the seed begins to germinate, the tree is in an imperfect state, until it begins to bear fruit. It is then a perfect tree, perfectly developing all its powers; yet, in many instances, it has but begun to grow—for it afterwards spreads even more rapidly than at any previous time, "bringing forth its fruit in its season."] Thus a perfect Christian grows far more than a feeble believer, whose growth is still obstructed by the shady thorns of sin, and by the draining suckers of iniquity. The babe in Christ is called to grow till he becomes a perfect Christian; a perfect Christian, till he becomes a disembodied saint; a disembodied saint, till he reaches the perfection of a saint glorified in body and soul; and such a saint, till he has fathomed the infinite depths of Divine perfection, that is, to all eternity. For if

we go on from faith to faith, and are spiritually “changed from glory to glory,” by beholding God “darkly through a glass” on earth, much more shall we experience improving changes, when we shall “see him as he is,” and behold him face to face, in various, numberless, and still brighter discoveries of himself in heaven.

CHAPTER III.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

THE misapprehension of those pious persons who deny the doctrine of Christian perfection, frequently springs from their inattention to its nature. To prove it, we have need only to oppose our definition of Christian perfection to the objections that are commonly raised against it.

I. "Your doctrine of perfection leads to pride." Impossible! if Christian perfection is perfect humility.

II. "It exalts believers, but only to the state of the vain-glorious Pharisee." Impossible! If our perfection is "perfect humility," it makes us sink deeper into the state of the humble, justified publican.

III. "It fills men with conceit of their own excellence, and makes them say to a weak brother, 'Stand by: I am holier than thou.'" Impossible again! We do not preach Pharisaic, but Christian perfection, which consists of perfect "poverty of

spirit," and of that perfect charity which "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, honors all men, and bears with the infirmities of the weak."

IV. "It sets repentance aside." Impossible! for it is "perfect repentance."

V. "It will make us slight Christ." More and more improbable! How can "perfect faith in Christ" make us slight Christ? Could it be more absurd to say that the perfect love of God would make us despise God?

VI. "It will supersede the use of mortification and watchfulness; for if sin be dead, what need have we to mortify it, and to watch against it?"

The objection has some plausibility; it shall, therefore, be answered in various ways. 1. If Adam, in his state of Paradisiacal perfection, needed perfect watchfulness and perfect mortification, how much more do we, who find the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" planted, not only in our gardens, but in our houses, and markets, and churches? 2. When we are delivered from sin, are we delivered from peccability and temptation? When the inward man of sin is put to death, is the devil dead? Is the corruption that is in the world destroyed? And have we not still our appetites and our five senses to "keep with all diligence," as well as our hearts, that the tempter may not enter into us, or that we may not

enter into his temptations? 3, and last. Jesus Christ, as son of Mary, was a perfect man. But how was he kept so unto the end? Was it not by "keeping his mouth with a bridle while the ungodly were in his sight," and by guarding all his senses with perfect assiduity, that the wicked one might not touch them to his hurt? And if Christ, our Head, kept his human perfection only through watchfulness and constant self-denial, is it not absurd to suppose that his perfect members can keep their perfection without treading in his steps?

VII. Another objection which has been urged runs thus: "Your doctrine of perfection makes it needless for perfect Christians to say the Lord's prayer; for if God 'vouchsafes to keep us this day without sin,' we have no need to pray at night that he would 'forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.'"

We answer, 1. [It is evident, from the remark of our Saviour at the close of this prayer, that one of the conditions of our forgiveness is that we forgive others. It is equally evident from the parable of the debtor, Matt. xviii. 23-35, especially from its conclusion, that when we cease to forgive, our own pardon is cancelled: "O, thou wicked servant, *I forgave thee all* that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had com-

passion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." It is equally evident, from the whole burden of the gospel, that the main condition of our forgiveness, without which we cannot maintain that relation to our Heavenly Father in which alone we receive remission of sins, is exercise of faith in Christ; that is, our present pardon depends upon the present exercise of faith and of a forgiving spirit toward our enemies, or those who may have injured us. If, then, we are liable to forfeit our pardon by failing to forgive others, or by ceasing to exercise energetic faith, how stupidly regardless of his best interests must be the man, however perfect, who does not continually pray, "Forgive us our trespasses"—in other words, "Enable us so to live as not to violate the conditions by which we maintain the relation of pardoned sinners." More especially should we thus the more diligently pray, since reason, Scripture, and observation, if not experience, concur in teaching that not a few, by faltering in faith and indulging malicious feelings, forfeit the relation which they had sustained to

God through Christ, in which they experienced remission of sins.

2. We all await the sentence of that final day when we shall be judged by the deeds "done in the body," nor until then shall our final justification be complete; and in view of our numerous infirmities and numberless inabilities—which yet imply no lack of love—it highly behooves us to pray continually, "Forgive us our trespasses."

3. At that day, the results of our actions and principles and neglects will be taken into the account: O, then, with what an emphasis need we pray daily, "Forgive us!"—hold us not to a strict account for the results of all our failures, and infirmities, and ignorance.

4. Each repetition of this prayer, while it tends to humble, cultivates in us a forgiving spirit.]

5. It fosters feelings of benevolence for the souls of all men, especially for those nearest to us. And, impelled by this benevolence, none is more fervent than the perfect man in presenting the petition in behalf of others as well as himself, "Forgive us our trespasses"—thus melting himself, as it were, into the common mass of mankind. He prays with more than ordinary emphasis that

"The arms of love that compass me
May all mankind embrace."

VIII. Another plausible objection runs thus : “It is plain from your account of Christian perfection that adult believers are free from sin, their hearts being purified by perfect faith and filled with perfect love. Now, sin is that which humbles us, and drives us to Christ; if, therefore, we were free from indwelling sin, we should lose a most powerful incentive to humility, which is the greatest ornament of the Christian.”

We answer : Sin never humbled any soul. Who has more sin than Satan? and who is prouder? Did sin make our first parents humble? Who was more humble than Christ? But was he indebted to sin for his humility? Do we not see daily that the more sinful men are, the prouder they are? that the holier a believer is, the more humble is he? What is holiness but the reverse of sin? and what is humility but one of the main ingredients of holiness? How absurd, then, is it to say that sin will make us humble, and, therefore, holy! As well might we affirm that stealing will make us honest, or lying make us truthful. What is inbred pride but one of the chief ingredients of indwelling sin, if it is not the thing itself? And how can pride be productive of humility? Can a serpent beget a dove? And will not men gather grapes of thorns sooner than humility of heart from haughtiness of spirit? Do we not see sin enough

in our past lives to humble us in the dust for ever? But above all, where does the gospel plead for the continuance of sin in our hearts, for this or any other purpose? To look at Christ in the manger, in Gethsemane, and on the cross; to consider him when he washes his disciples' feet; and obediently to listen to him when he says, "Learn of me to be meek and lowly in heart"—is not this the evangelical method of getting more humility?

The following plausible sophism has had much influence in deceiving many into this strange mistake: When believers are humbled *for* a thing, they are humbled *by* it: believers are humbled *for* sin, therefore they are humbled *by* sin. Now we readily grant that penitents are humbled for sin; or, in other terms, that they humbly repent of sin; but we deny that they are humbled by sin. To show the absurdity of this whole argument, it is only necessary to produce an exact parallel: When people are bled *for* a thing, they are bled *by* it; but people are sometimes bled *for* a cold, therefore people are sometimes bled *by* a cold.

IX. "We do not assert that all perfection is imaginary. Our meaning is that all Christian perfection is in Christ—that we are perfect in his person, and not in our own."

Answer. If by being perfect only in Christ is meant that we can attain to Christian perfection

in no other way than by being perfectly grafted in him, the true vine, and by deriving, like vigorous branches, the perfect sap of his perfect righteousness to enable us to bring forth fruit unto perfection, we are perfectly agreed ; for we perpetually assert that nothing but “ Christ in us the hope of glory,” nothing but “ Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith,” or, which is all one, nothing but the “ law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, can make us free from the law of sin and death,” and “ perfect us in love.”

But as we never advanced that Christian perfection is held any other way than by faith that “ roots and grounds” us in Christ, we suspect that some hidden error lurks under these equivocal phrases : “ All our perfection is in Christ’s person ; we are perfect in him, and not in ourselves.”

If it is insinuated by such language that we need not, cannot be perfect by an inherent personal conformity to God’s holiness, because Christ is thus perfect for us ; or should it be meant that we are perfect in him, just as the sick in a hospital are perfectly healthy in the physician who gives them his attendance—as the filthy leper was perfectly clean in the Lord, before he had felt the power of Christ’s gracious words, “ I will, be thou clean ;” or as hungry Lazarus was perfectly fed in the person of the rich man at whose gate he lay starving—

if this be the meaning, we are in conscience bound to oppose it, for the following reasons :

1. If believers are perfect because Christ is perfect for them, why does the apostle exhort them to “go on to perfection?”

2. If believers were perfect in Christ, they would all be equally perfect. But does not St. John talk of some who are perfected, and of others who are not yet “made perfect in love?”

3. The apostle exhorts us to be “perfect in every good work;” and does not common sense dictate that there is a difference between our good works and the person of Christ?

4. Does not our Lord himself show that his personal righteousness will by no means be accepted instead of our personal perfection, where he says : “Every branch in me which beareth not fruit”—or whose fruit never comes to perfection; see Luke viii. 14—“my Father taketh it away;” far from imputing to it his perfect fruitfulness?

5. A believer’s perfection consists in such a high degree of “faith as works by perfect love.” And does not this high degree of faith chiefly imply uninterrupted self-diffidence, self-denial, self-despair? a heartfelt, ceaseless recourse to the blood, merits, and righteousness of Christ? and grateful love to him “because he first loved us,” and fervent charity toward all mankind for his sake?

Three things which, in the very nature of things, cannot be in Christ at all, or cannot possibly be in him in the same manner in which they must be in believers.

6. Is not this doctrine big with mischief? May not the impenitent sinner persuade himself to continue in sin, or the penitent Christian to return to it, by the persuasion that Christ's perfection is imputed to him, and he, consequently, does not need intrinsic purity in himself? [Nay, have we not many melancholy instances of it throughout the land? and can any doctrine decidedly mischievous in its tendencies originate with God?] But in this, do we not see a direct tendency to set godliness aside, and to countenance gross Antinomianism?

7. Who can read the words of Christ, and not perceive that the perfection which he preached was a perfection of holy dispositions, productive of holy actions in all his followers? and that it is, of consequence, a personal perfection, as much inherent in us, and yet as much derived from him and dependent upon him, as the perfection of our bodily health?—the chief difference consisting in this, that the perfection of our health comes to us from God in Christ, as the God of *nature*; whereas, our Christian perfection comes to us from God in Christ, as the God of *grace*.

8. [The doctrine of our being perfect in Christ, in the sense which we controvert, is the offspring of the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ, and is held in common with it. They consequently stand or fall together. They are both based upon the false assumption that the righteousness or perfection of Christ's *life* is the meritorious, procuring cause of our salvation—an assumption which is repugnant alike to reason and Scripture. The teaching of Scripture is, that “we have redemption through his *blood*,” “redeemed by the precious blood of Christ;” and nowhere is it stated that the righteousness of his life is, in any sense, the righteousness of ours, certainly not as the procuring cause. The teaching of reason is, that if the righteousness of Christ's life were imputed to us as our righteousness, there could be no end to the extent of such imputation, as he is infinite; therefore, as an irresistible sequence, there could be no necessity for his death. Again: Revelation demands of us to “be holy,” to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness;” and not to expect Him “whose eyes are too pure to look upon sin,” to look on us, while influenced by unhallowed tempers, as perfectly holy because Christ was holy; while reason declares that the analogy and fitness of such a scheme is not discoverable by any light which

she can supply ; and, moreover, that it is practically fraught with much mischief to the best interests of religion.]

9. Imputed obedience rests upon the same footing, and stands or falls by the same arguments. Besides those mentioned, we add the following :

(1.) The law speaks often of vicarious suffering, but never of vicarious love or obedience. (2.) If we obey by proxy, we may sin as much as we please ; for it is plain that if the obedience of another be accepted in lieu of our own, while we continue to indulge in a slight degree of sin, it may be thus accepted if we indulge a little more, and so on, until we have reached the depths of transgression.

CHAPTER IV.

ANSWERS TO THE ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF THE NECESSARY CONTINUANCE OF INDWELLING SIN.

THE objections that have been urged against the doctrine of Christian perfection having been considered, we turn to an examination of those arguments by which the necessary continuance of indwelling sin in us till death is contended for.

I. "Indwelling sin is necessary to exercise our patience and industry."

Our Lord was perfectly free from indwelling sin, yet we do not see that his patience and industry wanted proper exercise; and we apprehend that the patience and industry of the most perfect believer will always, without the opposition of indwelling sin, find full exercise in doing and suffering the whole will of God; in striving against the sins of others, endeavoring, by example and precept, to bring them to Christ; in building up the Church; in keeping his own body under; in resisting the

numberless temptations that beset him ; and in preparing for the final conflict with the king of terrors.

II. “By the contests of the Spirit of grace within us with the powers of indwelling sin, the Lord magnifies himself to his people, and the continuance of it is a means by which believers have such views of the perfections and glory of God as they could not here obtain without it. It magnifies the power and patience of God : the power of God to support us under this conflict ; and his patience in bearing with our manifold weakness and ingratitude. Those believers who are most sensible of the power and prevalency of indwelling sin, are most thankful that the endearing relations of God’s distinguishing love are true.”

Unmask this plausible argument of its rhetoric, and you will find it to be this insinuating viper—smooth, yet poisonous—“The longer we continue in sin, or the longer sin continues in us, the more is grace manifested and magnified in us ;” or, if you will speak as the apostolic controversialist, “Let us continue in sin that grace may abound.” A notion, this, which is the very soul of Antinomianism unmasked. Again. If the continuance of indwelling sin magnifies God’s grace and patience in saving ungrateful sinners, the continuance of outward sin will do this much more ; so that the more

we sin on earth, the louder will we sing in heaven. [This is too absurd to argue against longer.]

III. "Indwelling sin is necessary to remain in the hearts of the regenerate, that they may see 'what an evil and bitter thing' is sin, in order that we may feel becoming shame and sorrow on account of it."

1. Does sin make us ashamed of sin? does it not rather make us love it? Does not experience convince imperfect believers that the more fretfulness, self-will, and obstinacy they have in their hearts, the less do they repent? How absurd is it, then, to suppose that the remains of these evil dispositions will help them to feel "becoming shame and sorrow" for sin!

2. Do we not get more becoming shame and sorrow by looking one moment at "Him whom we have pierced," than by poring over our corruptions for an hour? If so, why plead for indwelling sin for this purpose? Who exalt Christ more, they, or we who maintain that our most becoming shame and deepest sorrow flow from his ignominy and sufferings, and not from indwelling sin and conflicting corruptions? Did not Job "abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes," when he saw his redeeming God by faith, much more than when he just kept his head above the waters of impatience and murmuring?

3. If the penitent thief properly learned in a few hours what an evil and bitter thing internal and external sin is, is it not absurd to suppose that he must have continued forty years full of indwelling sin to learn that lesson, if God had added forty years to his life? Would this delay have been to the honor of his Divine Teacher?

4. Who had ever less to do with indwelling sin and its cursed attacks than the holy Jesus and faithful angels? Yet who is more filled with perfect abhorrence of all iniquity? On the other hand, who has been more distracted and longer torn by indwelling sin than the devil? And who, nevertheless, is better reconciled to it? Or who is more plagued by the continual rendings and bitings of the lions and vipers within, than those passionate, revengeful people who say, with all the positiveness of Jonah and Absalom, "I do well to be angry, and revenge is sweet?" Experience, therefore, demonstrates the inconclusiveness of this argument.

5. Last. When Christ cast seven devils out of Mary Magdalene, did he leave one or two devils behind, to teach her "becoming shame and sorrow for sin?" And was it these two remaining "Diabolonians" that made her dissolve in tears at Christ's feet? or was it the grateful, penitential love which she felt for her gracious deliverer? Is

it not astonishing that a false theory should lead gospel ministers to so far forget themselves and their Saviour as to teach, as openly as for decency they dare, that the fanning breath of the Spirit, the oil of Messiah's grace, and the hallowed snuffers of the sanctuary, cannot make the candle of the Lord within his spiritual temples burn continually clear, unless we use, to the end of our life, the foul finger of Satan, indwelling sin, and Adam's accursed extinguisher, original corruption !

IV. "It is meet that we should be punished by the continuance of indwelling sin, for the unfaithfulness and slothfulness that have caused our departures from duty."

To this we answer, 1. That although believers frequently give place to sloth and unfaithfulness, yet they are not at all necessitated to do it.

2. If the constant indwelling of sin be a just punishment for not making a proper use of the talent of grace which God gives us, it evidently follows that our unfaithfulness, and not a necessity appointed by God, is the very worm that destroys our sinless perfection ; and the moment our opponents grant this, they allow all that we contend for, unless they should be able to prove that God necessitates us to be unfaithful, in order to punish us infallibly with indwelling sin for life.

V. "The contests kept up in believers by in-

dwelling sin, furnish occasion to discover the strength of grace, as well as to distinguish it from its counterfeits."

This argument reminds me of a speech which a shameless young debauchee once made to me. "I kept," said he, "drinking and dozing in such a tavern, without ever going to bed, ever being sober one hour, for twenty-three days. I never had so remarkable an occasion to discover the strength of my body and the excellence of my constitution." However, in a few months, while he continued in the condition to discover the strength of his constitution, a mortal disorder seized upon him, and removed him into eternity. We hope that the following considerations will make the supporters of this argument heartily ashamed of it:

1. Nothing ever showed more fully the reality and strength of grace than the conflicts which the man Christ Jesus went through, though he never conflicted a moment with indwelling sin.

2. The strength and excellence of a remedy is much better discovered by the removal of the disorder which it is designed to cure, than by the conflicts which the poor patient has with pain, till death comes to terminate his misery. And,

3. The argument here considered represents Christ as a physician who keeps his patients upon the rack, to render himself the more necessary

to them, and to show the strength of the anodyne mixture by which he gives them, now and then, a little ease under their continued pain.

VI. "By means of the continued struggle between indwelling sin and grace, the Lord wins his people from the present evil world, and makes them long for the land of promise, as for the land of rest; that is, he can and does make the presence of evil so irksome to the believer that it makes him ardently long for complete deliverance from it."

That is, in plain English, he keeps his patients so long upon the rack of their indwelling sin, that at last they are forced to long for death, the great cleanser from heart iniquity. This argument would have been complete if it had been supported by these two passages: "I do well to be angry even unto death." "In those days men—plagued by the locusts which ascend out of the bottomless pit—shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." But the following remark or two will show more clearly the absurdity of this argument:

1. Did not Christ long for heaven without indwelling sin? Do not holy believers, who are freest from indwelling sin, long most for the beatific vision? And do we not see that fallen believers, who are most filled with indwelling sin, are most apt to be lovers of sin and the world, "rather than lovers of God?" Are they not the very

people who, unmindful of Lot's wife, stay in the plain, instead of escaping for their life, and fleeing to the celestial mount of God, without ever looking behind them? How absurd, then, is it to prop up the throne of indwelling sin in the hearts of believers, that its tyrannic law may make them long for heaven!

2. Is not indwelling sin a clog, rather than a spur, to the heavenly racers? If sin be of such service to us to make us run the career of holy longing after the heavenly rest, why does the apostle exhort us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us?" If we want a spur to make us mend our pace, need we the spur of indwelling sin? Is it not more likely to spur us to hell than to heaven? If we have thousands of sinless spurs, what need have we of keeping that to drive us to heaven which drove Adam behind the trees of the garden, not to say out of his native Paradise?

VII. The last argument which we have to consider is from the illustrious commentator, the Rev. Matthew Henry. "Corruption," says he, "is left remaining in the hearts of good Christians, that they may learn war, keep on the whole armor of God, and stand continually on their guard." "Thus corruption is driven out of the hearts of believers

by *little and little*. The work of sanctification will be carried on gradually, but judgment will, at length, be brought forth to victory :” namely, when death shall come to the assistance of the atoning blood and of the Spirit’s power. That this is Mr. Henry’s doctrine, I infer from his comment on Gal. v. 17 : “In a renewed man, where there is something of a good principle, there is a struggle between the remainders of sin and the beginnings of grace ; and this, Christians must expect, will be their exercise as long as they continue in this world ;” or, to speak more intelligibly, till they go into the death-purgatory.

Besides this passage, he builds this uncomfortable doctrine upon Deut. vii. 22 : “The Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee, little by little ; thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.” And he gives us to understand that “pride and security and other sins” are “the enemies more dangerous than the beasts of the field that would be apt to increase” upon us if God should deliver us from indwelling sin, *i. e.*, from the remains of pride and carnal security, and other sins. This exposition is backed by an appeal to the following text : “Now these are the nations that the Lord left to prove Israel by them, to know whether

they—the Israelites—would hearken to the commandments of the Lord.” Judges iii. 1–4. See Mr. Henry’s exposition of these passages.

To this grand argument we answer,

1. That it is absurd to build the mighty doctrine of a death-purgatory upon an historical allusion. If such allusions were proofs, we could easily multiply our arguments. We could say that sin is to be utterly destroyed, because Moses says: “The Lord delivered into our hands Og and all his people, and we smote him, until none was left unto him remaining.” Deut. iii. 3. Because Saul was commanded “utterly to destroy the sinners, the Amalekites,” and lost his crown for sparing their king. 1 Sam. xv. And a number of other such proofs. But we should blush to build the doctrine of Christian perfection upon so absurd and slender a foundation. Yet such a foundation would be far more solid than that on which Mr. Henry builds the doctrine of Christian imperfection, and of the necessary indwelling of sin in the most holy believers; for,

2. It appears from Num. xxxiii. 51, etc., that the sparing of the Canaanites was a punishment inflicted on the Israelites, as well as a favor shown to the Canaanites, some of whom, like Rahab and the Gibeonites, probably turned to the Lord, and, as “God’s creatures,” enjoyed his saving mercy in

the land of promise. But is indwelling sin one of God's creatures, that he should show it any favor, and should refuse his assistance to the faithful believers who are determined to give it no quarter? Can indwelling sin be converted to God, as the indwelling Canaanites might, and as some of them undoubtedly were?

3. The capital flaws of the argument are, we apprehend, two suppositions, the absurdity of which is glaring. "Corruption," says he, "is left remaining in the hearts of good Christians, that they may learn war, and keep on the whole armor of God, and stand continually on their guard." Just as if Christ had not done all these without any help from indwelling sin!—just as if the world, the devil, the weakness of the flesh, and death, our last enemy, with which our Lord so severely conflicted, were not adversaries powerful enough to prove us, to engage us to learn war, and to make us keep on, *and use* the whole armor of God to the "end of our life!" and just as though the continuance of indwelling hatred to God and rebellion against him—which constitute the very essence and source of all sin of all kinds—would put us to extra pains to put on and keep bright our whole armor to fight for him.

The other absurd proposition is, that "pride and security and other sins," which are supposed to be

typified by the "wild beasts," mentioned Deut. vii. 22, will increase upon us by the destruction of indwelling sin. But is it not as ridiculous to suppose this as to say, Pride will increase upon us by the destruction of pride, and carnal security will gather strength by the extirpation of carnal security, and by the implanting of constant watchfulness, which is a branch of the Christian perfection for which we contend?

4. Is not the inference which Mr. Henry draws from these words, "Thou mayest not consume them at once; the Lord will put them out before thee by little and little," also highly absurd? Does he give us the shadow of an argument to prove that this verse was spoken of our indwelling corruptions? And suppose it was, would this prove that the doctrine of an indwelling purgatory is true? You must eat your dinner by little and little; you cannot swallow it at one gulp. A farmer tells his son, We cannot plough this field *at once*, but we may "by little and little;" that is, by making one furrow after another, till we end the last furrow. Hence I draw the following inferences: We eat our meals and plough our fields "by little and little;" therefore no field can be ploughed, and no meal eaten, before death. [It does not require an Aristotle to perceive the flaw in these conclusions.]

5. But the greatest absurdity, I apprehend, is yet behind. Not to observe that we do not remember to have read any command in our Bibles not to consume sin at once; or any declaration that God will put it out only "by little and little;" we ask, what length of time do you suppose God means? You make him say that he will make an end of indwelling sin "by little and little:" do you think he means four days, four years, or fourscore years? If you say that God cannot, or will not, wholly cleanse the thoughts of our hearts under fourscore years, you send all who die under that age into hell, or into some purgatory, where they must wait till the eighty years of their conflict with indwelling sin are ended. If you say that God can or will do it in four days, but not under, you absurdly suppose that the penitent thief remained at least three days in Paradise full of indwelling sin: seeing his sanctification must be "carried on gradually," for the space of four days at least. If you are obliged to grant that the words, "by little and little," as applied to the destruction of indwelling sin, may mean four hours—the time which the penitent thief probably lived after his conversion—as well as four days, do you not begin to be ashamed of your system? And if you reply that death alone fully extirpates indwelling sin, does not this favorite tenet of yours

overturn Mr. Henry's doctrine about the slow, "gradual" destruction of indwelling sin? May not a sinner believe in a moment, when God helps him to believe? And may not a believer—whom you suppose necessarily full of indwelling sin, as long as he is in the world—die in a moment? If you answer in the negative, you deny the sudden death of John the Baptist, St. James, and St. Paul, who had their heads cut off in a moment: in a word, you deny that any believer can die suddenly. If you reply in the affirmative, you give up the point, and grant that indwelling sin may be instantly destroyed. And now what becomes of Mr. Henry's argument which supposes that sanctification can never be complete without a long, gradual process; and that the extirpation of sin cannot take place but "by little and little?"

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION ATTAINABLE IN THIS LIFE.

WE have hitherto stood on the defensive against those who insinuate that the apostles, patriarchs, and prophets were advocates of the twin doctrines of Christian imperfection and a death-purgatory. We shall now attack these doctrines by a variety of arguments, which, we hope, will recommend themselves to the candid reader's conscience and reason; and in the meantime establish the attainability of Christian perfection in this life.

I. Death is not necessary to perfect man's moral nature; nay, it can have nothing to do in changing his moral relations. 1. Were pride a disordered stomach, or raging anger a fit of the toothache; were vanity the dropsy, or revenge a fever; were disobedience a broken bone, or uncharitableness a rheumatic affection; then there would be some sense in the doctrine of Christian imperfection, and reason would subscribe to the notion of a death-

purgatory ; for it is certain that death effectually cures dyspepsia, toothache, dropsy, and the rest. But what real affinity have moral disorders with bodily death ?

2. [We have shown that the possession of those susceptibilities which are essential to human nature, does not constitute a man a sinner. Sin cannot, in any direct sense, be predicated of man's physical nature. Its seat, its entire responsibility, lies in his moral faculties—in the conscience, the will, the intention. Now, as his physical nature is endowed with none of these, it cannot be said to be sinful. How can a mere material machine—for such is the human body—do any thing of itself that may be, morally, either right or wrong? I use my hand to send a knife to the heart of a friend. Does the knife sin? Or does my hand sin any more than the knife? Evidently neither sins, each being an impassive instrument. Is it not rather my soul which determines upon the act, and uses the hand which is under its complete control, as its unconscious implement, to perpetrate the deed? But further. I was very hungry, and I slew him for food to satisfy that hunger. Now, did my stomach sin in warning me that my body was wasting away, and needed food to restore it? Was not this one of the very purposes for which my stomach was made? And does it sin in the

faithful discharge of the very function ordained for it by its Creator? It was not the stomach, then, any more than the hand, that sinned; but the moral part of my nature, in consenting to use unlawful means to gratify its demands. The same reasoning will apply to all and each of the appetites, susceptibilities, and powers of our corporeal frame, and with equal force. These things being so, the conclusion cannot be averted, that the moral state of man is not affected either by its union with, or severance from, the body.

3. This conclusion is further established by a consideration of what is physical death. And what is it but a simple dissolution of the temporary union of two things totally dissimilar in their nature? what, but the soul's forsaking a tenement no longer fit for its abode? Does the leaving of a material dwelling, but temporarily occupied, alter a man's moral nature? "Where the tree falleth," says the voice of inspired wisdom, "there it shall be." Eccl. xi. 3. But to be more minute. "Death is the total and permanent cessation of all the vital functions." How cessation of the vital functions is to effect a moral renovation, is difficult to conceive. Indeed, it is contrary to matter of fact; for it is well known that such cessation frequently occurs, as in all cases of asphyxia, in which animation is suspended for hours, and sometimes even for sev-

eral days. And yet we cannot perceive that persons who have suffered thus have, on recovering, shown any marked indications of a moral change brought about by this protracted cessation of all the vital functions. And we see no reason why the cessation of those functions for an hour or a minute should not as effectually sanctify our nature, as a cessation of a thousand years.

But if it should be contended that the “cases alluded to do not involve a *total* suspension of all the vital functions,” we ask for the proof, and contend that all the appearances are in favor of our position. And if it be but partial, we argue that if a *permanent*, total suspension of all the vital functions operates a total revolution of the moral nature of man, why should not a temporary suspension of some or all of them result in a partial revolution—at least effect a considerable appreciable change? But this, the facts in the premises deny.

4. Age brings with it the impairment of all the physical faculties, and the destruction of many. Yet the aged transgressor is none the less disposed to transgress, than when youthful blood gave life to his energies. Yet if the destruction of these powers would destroy sin, their impairment would impair sin in proportion.

5. If our moral state and relations be so entirely

transformed by death, why are they not correspondingly changed by disease—of which death is but the consummation—in proportion to its severity and the nearness to death? But do facts show that such are the results of disease? Is it not often remarked that such a man's "ruling passion was strong in death?" that some evil passion was uncommonly stirred up at the very moment of dissolution? Does not the working of the vilest affections evince that no good has been accomplished? And does the after-life, in case of apparent struggling with death, manifest any moral melioration? If not, with what show of reason can we suppose that that is done for us by death which can be done by nothing else, not even, without its aid, by the blood of Christ?

6. If any part of the work of freeing man from sin be done by death, why may not the whole? And then what need of the advent and death of Christ? And why may not the Universalists' doctrine be true, that "he that is dead *physically*, is freed from sin?" Rom. vi. 7.]

7. Death, far from introducing imperfect Christians into the state of Christian perfection, will take them out of the very possibility of ever attaining it. This will appear indubitable, if we remember that Christian perfection consists in perfect repentance, perfect faith, perfect hope, perfect

love of an invisible God, perfect charity for visible enemies, perfect patience in pain, and perfect resignation under losses ; in a constant bridling of our bodily appetites, in an assiduous keeping of our senses, in a cheerful taking up of our cross, in a resolute “ following of Christ out of the camp,” and in a deliberate choice to “ suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” Now, so certain as there can be no perfect repentance in the grave—no Christian *faith*, where all is *sight*—no perfect *hope*, where all is enjoyment—no perfect love of an invisible God or of visible enemies, where God is visible and enemies are invisible—no bearing pain with perfect patience, when pain is no more, and suffering affliction with the people of God, where no shadow of affliction lights upon the people of God—so certain, I say, does death put the attainment and exercise of Christian perfection out of the reach of all who had not previously attained it ; for as death incapacitates us for these duties, so it does for every branch of Christian perfection.

8. It is certain that God, who can command iron to swim, and fire to cool, could have appointed death to make an end of heart-pollution, and to be our complete saviour from sin ; and then there would have been some reason in those arguments which contend for a death-purgatory. But in our Bible we do

not read that God ever appointed the king of terrors to deliver us from the deadly seeds of iniquity, or ever gave to indwelling sin a lease of any believer's heart for life. If it be there, is it where it is written that "Christ has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel?" Does the Scripture anywhere say that the Holy Spirit is sent to perfect us in love through death that purifies the heart, and which, if any man hath, he will purify himself even as God is pure? How rash, then, is it to substitute the pangs of death, without any scriptural warrant, for the Holy Spirit, in accomplishing the most difficult work in our redemption, and, of consequence, the most glorious, even the "purifying unto himself a peculiar people," not full of inbred unrighteousness, but dead to sin, free from sin, pure in heart, and "zealous of good works!"

9. From these arguments as to the influence of death on our moral standing, it follows incontrovertibly, that if ever we reach heaven, we will be made perfectly holy in some purgatory after death, or else that work must be accomplished in this life.

10. If our opponents allow that faith and love may be made perfect two or three minutes before death, they give up the point. Death is no longer necessary to the destruction of unbelief and sin;

for if the "evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God," may be taken away, and the completely "honest and good heart" given two or three minutes before death, we desire to know why this change may not take place two or three hours, two or three weeks, or two or three years, before that awful moment. See this treated more fully in the preceding chapter.

II. As we have thus shown that Christian perfection cannot be secured in the next world, nor in the transition from this to the coming life, we might rest the argument here, inferring conclusively that, in order to get to heaven, where nothing defiled with the least impurity can enter, we must perfect holiness in the fear of God "in this present world." Yet we will not stop here, but show, from a variety of other arguments, that the attainableness of Christian perfection is one of the cornerstones in the grand structure of Christian doctrine, as presented in the gospel of Christ.

1. How does the notion of sin *necessarily* dwelling in the hearts of the most advanced Christians, agree with the full tenor of the New Covenant, which runs thus: "I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts;" "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus shall make them free from the law of sin and death?" If the law of perfect love to God and man be fully put

into the heart of the believer, according to the full tenor of Christ's gospel, what room remains for the hellish statutes of Satan? Does not the Lord cleanse the believer's heart, as he writes the law of love there? And when that law is wholly written by the Spirit—"the finger of God"—which applies the all-cleansing blood, is not the heart wholly cleansed? When God completely gives the "heart of flesh," does he not completely take away the "heart of stone?" Is not the heart of stone the very rock in which the serpent, *indwelling sin*, lurks? And will God take away that accursed rock, and spare the venomous viper that breeds in its clefts?

2. If Christ takes away the *outward* pollution of believers, while he absolutely leaves their hearts full of indwelling sin in this life, why did he find fault with the Pharisees for "cleansing the outside of the cup and the platter, while they left the inside full of all corruption?" If God says, "My son, give me thy heart;" if he requires "truth in the inward parts;" and complains that the Jews "drew near to him with their lips, while their hearts were far from him," is it not strange that he should be willing for the hearts of his own peculiar people to remain necessarily unclean during the term of life? Besides, is there any other gospel way of fully cleansing the lips and hands than

by thoroughly cleansing the heart? And is not a cleansing so far *Pharisaical* as it is *heartless*? Once more: if Christ has assured us that "blessed are the pure in heart," and that "if the Son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed," does it not behoove our opponents to prove that a believer has a *pure heart* who is full of indwelling corruption, and that a man is *free indeed* who is still sold under inbred sin?

3. Is there not a present *cleansing power*, as well as a present *atoning efficacy*, in the Redeemer's blood? We have already noticed that the same passage of Scripture which informs us that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," declares also that, upon the same gracious terms, "He is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Now, if the faithful and just God is ready to forgive, to-day, a poor mourner who sincerely confesses his guilt; and if it would be doing Divine faithfulness and justice great dishonor to say that God will not forgive a weeping penitent before the article of death; is it doing those Divine perfections honor to say that God will not cleanse, *before death*, a believer who humbly confesses and deeply laments the remains of sin? Why should not God display his faithfulness and justice in cleansing us *now* from inbred sin, as well as in forgiving us now our actual in-

iniquities, if we now comply with the gracious terms, to the performance of which this double blessing is annexed in the gospel charter?

4. When our Lord says, "Make the tree good and its fruit good: a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things," does he suppose that the hearts of his people must always remain fraught with indwelling sin? Is indwelling sin a *good treasure*? Or does Christ anywhere plead for the necessary indwelling of a bad treasure in a good man? When the spouse "is all glorious within," when her "eye is single and her whole body is full of light," how can she still be full of darkness and inbred iniquity? And when St. Paul observes that established Christians are "full of goodness," Rom. xv. 14, who can think that he means that they are full of *heart-corruption*, and—what is worse still—that they must continue so to their dying-day?

5. As those feelings which constitute the character of the perfect Christian, and those duties which are required of him, all pertain to this life, and many of them exclusively so, how absurd is it to put off their attainment till the moment of death, or until we get to heaven! A part of that perfection is perfect mourning and repentance; but who imagines that sorrow and contrition will be exercised in perfection where "all tears shall be wiped

from all faces?" Another constituent is perfect love and forgiveness of our enemies; but how can these essential Christian graces be perfected where there are no enemies to be loved or forgiven? It also enjoins perfect rejoicing under revilings and persecutions; but how can this be in heaven, where there will be none to revile or persecute? Christian perfection also demands perfect self-denial and perfect control of all the appetites and passions; but how can this be in heaven in its perfection, where there will probably be no appetites, where passion will be under no sort of temptation to unhallowed excitement, and where there will be no tempter to lead us astray? Again: if Christian perfection implies the perfect use of "the whole armor of God," what can be more absurd than the thought that we shall be made perfect Christians in heaven or at death? How will it be proven that we shall perfectly use the helmet of hope, perfectly wield the shield of faith, and perfectly quench the fiery darts of the devil, in heaven, where faith, hope, and the darts of the devil shall never enter? Or how shall we demonstrate that a soldier shall perfectly go through his exercise in the article of death, that is, in the very moment he leaves the army, and for ever puts off his harness?

[6. We argue the attainability of Christian per-

fection in the present life—"in this world"—from the express declarations of God's word; to say nothing of the absurdity of giving us, in our present state of being, rules which must be fulfilled in another, but cannot be in this. The duties which Christian perfection involves are to be performed by us in this life, according to the evident spirit and plain statement of the letter of the law. For the grace of God hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly—that is, fulfil perfectly all the duties of a perfect Christian—"in this present world." Tit. ii. 11, 12.

7. This world is unmistakably fixed by the Apostle John, in his first Epistle, as the theatre of this perfection of love, at the same time that he distinctly avows its accomplishment in himself and others. "*Herein is our love made perfect*, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because *as he is, so are we in this world.*" 1 John iv. 17. We can conceive of no mode of expression more direct, more unequivocal, and more forcible than this, in which he distinctly professes Christian perfection in this world, and declares it to be a necessary preparation for the final judgment.

8. Besides this profession of St. John, and that

similar one of St. Paul, in Phil. iii. 15, in behalf both of themselves and others, the Scriptures are full of instances, which were recorded “for ensamples,” of perfect servants of God, under every dispensation, from Genesis to Revelation—from Enoch, who was so holy that death did not intervene between his earthly abode and his heavenly home, including Noah and Job and a host of others, down even to the last of the apostles of the Saviour.

9. Would it not be an instance of preposterous folly for an intelligent being to establish a plan, and institute an extensive course of operations, bringing to bear expensive agencies, for the avowed accomplishment of what he knows to be impracticable, at least so long as the influences of the agencies, etc., should last? Yet, if there be no such thing as perfection in this life, such a charge, according to the testimony of the Apostle Paul, rests against the Institutor of all the various grades of the gospel ministry; for “He gave some, apostles; some, prophets; some, evangelists; some, pastors and teachers; *for the perfecting of the saints*—till *we all* come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Eph. iv. 11–13.

10. The same may be said of the whole plan of

redemption, and especially of its Author. For when the angel announced his advent, he directed his name to be "called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." In accordance with this, John the Baptist exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God, which *taketh away* the sin of the world;" and John the Evangelist declares that "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," which works, as the context shows, are sin—sin inward and outward, secret and overt; for neither here nor elsewhere have we any warrant in the inspired word for inserting a proviso in favor of indwelling sin, the bitterest of all, as it is the fountain that supplies all iniquity, the root from which springs every other sin. All his teachings, and his whole life, and his atoning death, declare how assiduously he pursued this, the one object of his incarnation and sufferings.

Now one of these following things must be true: Either he was so unwise as to propose a plan which he knew could not be accomplished; or he could not see the bearings of his own operations; or he is too impotent to accomplish what his wisdom had devised; or he tantalizes man by proposing to accomplish for him what he does not intend; or else, as the only other alternative, he intends to,

and when the conditions are complied with, actually does, save his people from their sins, both inward and outward.]

11. From the preceding argument, it follows that the graces of repentance, faith, hope, and Christian charity, or love for an invisible God, for trying friends, and for visible enemies, must be perfected *here or never*. If it be granted that these graces are, or may be, perfected here, this is all that we contend for. And if it be asserted that they shall never be perfected, because there is “no perfection here,” and because the perfection of repentance, etc., can have no more place in heaven than sinning and mourning, I ask, what becomes then of the following scriptures? “As for God, his work is perfect: being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you—who have always obeyed, Phil. ii. 12—will perform, or, *ἐπιτελέσει*, will perfect it,” if you continue to obey. “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me. Praying exceedingly that we, as workers together with God, might perfect that which is lacking in your faith. Looking unto Jesus, the author and—*τελειωτὴν*—the perfecter of our faith; for he is faithful that promised.” How can the Lord be faithful, and yet never perfect the repentance and faith of his obedient people? Will

he sow such a blessed seed as that of faith, hope, and love to our enemies, and never let a grain of it bring forth fruit unto perfection? [Is not such a doctrine too absurd to be admitted, except by the blindness of prejudice?]

12. But we are frequently asked, Where are those perfect Christians? We answer, that if the *perfect love that keeps the commandments* is not attainable, the Bible is no better than a Popish legend, and that that book, which makes such frequent mention of the *perfect* and of *perfection*, and in such varied ways urges its readers to the attainment of *perfection*, ought to be ranked among religious romances, which recommend imaginary things, as if they were indubitable realities. So sure, then, as the Bible is true, there *are*, or *may be*, perfect Christians. But, “while we honor dead saints, we call those who are alive enthusiasts, hypocrites, or heretics.” It is not proper, therefore, to expose them to the darts of envy or malice. And suppose living witnesses of perfect love were produced, what would be the consequence? Their testimony would be excepted to by those who disbelieve the doctrine of Christian perfection, just as the testimony of the believers, who enjoy the sense of their justification, is rejected by those who do not believe that a clear experience of the

peace and pardoning love of God is attainable in this life. If the original, direct perfection of Christ was denied and horribly blackened by his bigoted opposers, how could the derived, reflected perfection of his members escape the same treatment from men whose hearts are tinctured with a degree of the same bigotry?

But if we could not point out a single instance, this would in no way affect the argument. For if we have proven that it is a doctrine of the word of God, it would be just as true, though there were not a single perfect Christian living. Would the evidences of the divinity of our holy Christianity be any the less valid, even though there could not be found a single Christian in the world?

Add to this, that in order to harden unbelievers, "the accuser of the brethren" perpetually obtrudes upon the Church, not only false witnesses of pardoning grace, but also vain pretenders to perfect love; for he knows that, by putting off as many counterfeits as he possibly can, he will give the enemies of the truth room to say that there is, in the Church, no gold purified seven times—no coin truly stamped with the King's image, *perfect love*, and bearing the royal inscription, "Holiness unto the Lord."

Therefore, instead of saying that this or the other eminent believer has attained Christian perfection, we rest the cause upon the plain and unequivocal doctrine of the Scriptures, and upon the experience of the "holy men of old," whose professions and experience it so faithfully records.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MISCHIEVOUSNESS OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN
IMPERFECTION.

THIS chapter is intended to prove the mischievousness of the doctrine of Christian imperfection.

I. It strikes at the doctrine of *salvation by faith*. “By grace are ye saved through faith,” not only from the guilt and outward acts of sin, but also from its roots and secret buds. “Not of works,” says the apostle, “lest any man should [Pharisaically] boast;” and may we not add, Not of DEATH, lest he that had the power of death, that is, the devil, should [absurdly] boast? Does not what strikes at the doctrine of faith, and abridges the salvation which we obtain by it, equally strike at Christ’s power and glory? Is it not the business of faith to receive Christ’s saving word, to apprehend the power of his sanctifying Spirit, and to inherit all the great promises by which he saves his penitent, believing people from their sins? Is

it not evident that if no believers can be saved from indwelling sin through faith, we must correct the apostle's doctrine, and say, "By grace are ye saved *from the remains of sin*, through death?" And can unprejudiced Protestants admit so Christ-debasing, death-exalting a tenet, without giving a dangerous blow to the genuine doctrines of the reformation?

II. It dishonors Christ as a *Prophet*; for, as such, he came to teach us to be now "meek and lowly in heart;" but the imperfect gospel of the day teaches that we must necessarily continue passionate and proud in heart till death; for pride and immoderate anger are, I apprehend, two main branches of indwelling sin. Again: my motto demonstrates that he publicly taught the multitudes the doctrine of perfection, and some of its opponents have insinuated that this doctrine is "shocking," not to say "blasphemous."

III. It disgraces Christ as *the Captain of our salvation*; for St. Paul says, that our Captain furnishes us with "weapons mighty through God to the pulling down of Satan's strongholds, and to the bringing of every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." But our opponents represent the devil's stronghold as absolutely impregnable. No weapons of our warfare can pull down Apollyon's throne. Inbred sin shall maintain its

place in man's heart till death strike the victorious blow. Christ may indeed fight against the Jericho within, as "Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon;" but then he must send for death, as Joab sent for David, saying, "I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters: now, therefore, gather the rest of the people together, encamp against the city, and take it, lest I take the city, and it be called after my name." 2 Sam. xii. 27, 28.

IV. It pours contempt upon him as *the Surety of the new covenant*, in which God has engaged himself to deliver obedient believers "from their enemies, that they may serve him without [tormenting] fear, all the days of their lives." For how does he execute his office in this respect, if he never sees that such believers be delivered from their most oppressive and inveterate enemy, indwelling sin? Or if that deliverance take place only at death, how can they, in consequence of their death freedom, "serve God without fear all the days of their lives?"

V. It affronts Christ as a *King*, when it represents the believer's heart, which is Christ's spiritual throne, as being necessarily full of indwelling sin—a spiritual rebel, who, notwithstanding the joint efforts of Christ and the believer, maintains his power against them both during the term of

life. Again: does not a good king deliver his loyal subjects from oppression, and avenge them of a tyrannical adversary, when they cry to him in their distress? But does our Lord show himself such a king, if he never avenge them, nor turn the usurper, the murderer, sin, out of their breasts? Once more: if our deliverance from sin depend upon the stroke of death, and not upon a stroke of Christ's grace, might we not call upon the *king of terrors*, as well as upon the *King of saints*, for deliverance from the remains of sin? But where is the difference between saying, "O death, help us!" and crying, "O Baal, save us?"

VI. It injures Christ as a *Restorer* of pure, spiritual worship in God's spiritual temple, the heart of man. For it indirectly represents him as a Pharisaic Saviour, who made much ado about driving, with a whip, harmless sheep and oxen out of his Father's material temple; but who gives full leave to Satan, not only to bring sheep and doves into the believer's heart, but also to harbor and breed there, during the term of life, the swelling toad, pride; and the hissing viper, envy; to say nothing of the greedy dog, avarice, and the filthy swine, impurity; under pretence of "exercising the patience and engaging the industry" of the worshippers.

VII. It insults Christ as a *Priest*; for our Mel-

chisedec shed his all-cleansing blood upon the cross, and now pours his all-availing prayer before the throne; asking that, upon evangelical terms, we may now be "cleansed from all unrighteousness, and perfected in one." But if we assert that believers, let them be ever so faithful, can never be thus cleansed and perfected in one till death comes to the Saviour's assistance, do we not place our Lord's cleansing blood, and powerful intercession, and of consequence his priesthood, in an unscriptural and contemptible light?

Should an attempt be made to retort this argument by saying, "that it is our doctrine, not theirs, which derogates from the honor of Christ's priesthood, because we should no longer need our High-Priest's blood, if we were cleansed from all sin;" I reply :

(1.) Perfect Christians need as much the virtue of Christ's blood, to prevent the guilt and pollution of sin from returning, as imperfect Christians want it to drive that guilt and pollution away. It is not enough that the blood of the true paschal Lamb has been sprinkled upon our souls to keep off the destroyer; it must still remain there to hinder his coming back "with seven other spirits more wicked than himself." (2.) A man is in the dark; he calls for a light; and when it is brought, he observes, The darkness of the room is now

totally removed. "Is it so, sir?" replies his footman; "then you need these candles no more; if they have totally removed the darkness of your apartment, you have no more need of them." He smiles at the absurdity of his servant's argument; and yet it is well if he does not admire the wisdom of my opponent's objection. (3.) The hearts of perfect Christians are cleansed and kept clean by faith; and Christian perfection means the perfection of Christian faith, whose property it is to endear Christ and his blood more and more; nothing, then, can be less reasonable than to say that, upon our principles, perfect believers have done with the atoning blood. (4.) Such believers continually "overcome the accuser of the brethren" through the blood of the Lamb; there is no moment, therefore, in which they can spare it: they are feeble believers who can yet dispense with its constant application; and hence it is that they continue feeble. None make so much use of Christ's blood as perfect Christians. Once it was only their medicine, which they took now and then, when a fit of fear, or a pang of guilt, obliged them to it; but now it is the Divine preservative, which keeps off the infection of sin. Now it is the reviving cordial, which they take to prevent their "growing weary or faint in their minds." Now it is their daily drink; now it is what they

sprinkle their every thought, word and work with. In a word, it is that blood which constantly speaks before God and in their consciences "better things than the blood of Abel," and actually procures for them all the blessings which they enjoy or expect. To say, therefore, that the doctrine of Christian perfection supersedes the need of Christ's blood, is not less absurd than to assert that the perfection of navigation renders the great deep a useless reservoir of water. Lastly: Are not the saints before the throne perfectly sinless? And who are more ready than they to extol the blood and sing the song of the Lamb: "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, be glory," etc.? If an angel preached to them the modern gospel, and desired them to plead for the remains of sin, lest they should lose their peculiar value for the atoning blood, would not they all suspect him to be an angel of darkness, transforming himself into an angel of light? And shall we be the dupes of the tempter, who deceives good men, that they may deceive us by a similar argument?

VIII. It discredits Christ as *the Fulfiller* of the Father's promise, and as *the Sender* of the indwelling, abiding Comforter, in order that our joy may be full. For the Spirit never takes his constant abode as a Comforter in a heart full of indwelling sin. If he visit such a heart with his consolations,

it is only "as a guest that tarrieth but a day." When he enters a soul fraught with inbred corruption, he rather acts as a Reprover than as a Comforter: throwing down the tables of the spiritual money-changers; hindering the vessels, which are not holiness unto the Lord, from being carried through God's spiritual temple, and expelling, according to the degree of our faith, whatsoever would make God's house "a den of thieves."

IX. The doctrine of our *necessary* continuance in indwelling sin to our last moments, makes us naturally overlook or despise the "exceeding great and precious promises given unto us, that by these we might be partakers of the Divine nature," that is, of God's perfect holiness; "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Pet. i. 4. And thus it naturally defeats the full effect of evangelical truths and ministerial labors; an effect, this, which is thus described by St. Paul: "Teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;" that is, perfect according to the richest dispensation of Divine grace, which is, "the gospel of Christ Jesus." Col. i. 28. Again: "The Scripture is profitable for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works." 2 Tim. iii. 16. Now we apprehend that the perfection which thoroughly furnishes

believers unto all good works, is a perfection productive of all the "good works" evangelically as well as providentially "prepared that we should walk in them" before death; because the Scriptures say: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work nor device" in death, that is, "in the grave whither thou goest." For as the tree falls, so it lies: if it falls full of rottenness, with a brood of vipers and a never-dying worm in its hollow centre, it will continue in that very condition; and woe to the man who trusts that the pangs of death will kill the worm, or that a purgative fire will spare the rotten wood and consume the vipers!

X. It defeats, in part, the end of the gospel precepts, to the fulfilling of which, gospel promises are but means. "All the law, the prophets," and the apostolic writings, "hang on these two commandments: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, and thy neighbor as thyself," through penitential faith in the light of thy dispensation; that is, in two words, thou shalt be *evangelically perfect*. Now, if we believe that it is absolutely impossible to be thus perfect by keeping these two blessed commandments in faith, we cannot but believe also that God, who requires us to keep them, is defective in *wisdom, equity, and*

goodness, by requiring us to do what is absolutely impossible; and we represent our Church as a wicked step-mother who betrays her children into the wanton commission of perjury, by requiring of every one of them, in the sacrament of baptism, a most solemn vow, by which they bind themselves, in the presence of God and of the congregation, that "they will keep God's holy will and commandments," that is, that they will keep God's evangelical law, "and walk in the same all the days of their life."

XI. It has a necessary tendency to unnerve our deepest prayers. How can we pray in faith that God would help us to "do his will on earth as it is done in heaven," or that he would "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, that we may perfectly love him and worthily magnify his holy name;" how can we, I say, ask this in faith, if we disbelieve the very possibility of having these petitions answered? And what poor encouragement has Epaphras upon the scheme which we oppose: "always to labor fervently for the Colossians in prayer, that they might stand perfect and complete in the will of God;" or St. Paul to wish that "the very God of peace would sanctify the Thessalonians wholly, and that their whole spirit, and soul, and body, might be preserved blameless," if

these requests could not be granted before death, and were unavoidably to be granted to them and to all believers in the article thereof?

XII. It soothes lukewarm, unholy professors, and encourages them to sit quietly under the vine of Sodom, and under their own barren fig tree: I mean under the baneful influence of their unbelief and indwelling sin; nothing being more pleasing to the carnal mind than this syren song: "It is absolutely impossible that the thoughts of your hearts should be cleansed in this life. God himself does not expect that you should be purified from all iniquity on this side the grave. It is proper that sin should dwell in your hearts by unbelief, to endear Christ to you, and so to *work together for your good*." The preachers of mere morality insinuate that God does not forgive sins before death. This dangerous, uncomfortable doctrine damps the faith of penitents, who think it absurd to expect *before death* what they are taught they can only receive *at death*. And as it is with the pardon of sins, so it is also with "cleansing from all unrighteousness." The preachers of Christian imperfection tell their hearers that nobody can be cleansed from heart-sin *before death*. This new doctrine makes them secretly trust in a death-purgatory, and hinders them from pleading in faith the promises of full sanctification before

death stares them in the face; while others, like spared Agag, madly venture upon the spear of the king of terrors, with their hearts full of indwelling sin. The dead tell no tales now; but it will be well if, in the day of resurrection, those who plead for the *necessary* indwelling of sin during the term of life, do not meet in the great day with some deluded souls, who will give them no thanks for betraying them, to their last moments, into the hands of indwelling sin, by insinuating that there can be no deliverance from our evil tempers before we are ready to exchange a death-bed for a coffin.

XIII. It greatly discourages willing Israelites, and weakens the hands of the faithful spies who want to lead feeble believers on, and to take by force the kingdom which consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; nothing being more proper to damp their ardor than such a speech as this: "You may strive against your corruptions and evil tempers as long as you please; but you shall never get rid of them: the Jericho within is impregnable; it is fenced up to heaven, and garrisoned by the tall, invincible, immortal sons of Anak: so strong are these adversaries, that the twelve apostles, with the help of Christ and the Holy Ghost, could never turn one of them out of his post. Nay, they so buffeted and overpowered

St. Paul, the most zealous of the apostles, that they fairly took him prisoner, 'sold him under sin,' and made him groan to the last, 'O wretched, carnal man that I am, who shall deliver me from the law of *my inbred corruptions*, which brings me into captivity to the law of sin? I thank God through *death*. So, then, with the flesh,' you must, as well as St. Paul, 'serve the law of sin' till you die. Nor need you fret at these tidings; for they are the pure gospel of Christ, the genuine doctrines of free grace and Christian liberty. In Christ you are free, but in yourselves you must continue to serve the law of sin; and, indeed, why should you not do it, since *the sins of a Christian are for his good*; for the most grievous falls serve to make us know our place, to drive us nearer to Christ, and to make us sing louder the praises of restoring grace."

How would this speech damp our desires after salvation from indwelling sin! How would it make us hug the cursed chains of our inbred corruptions, if the cloven foot of the imperfect, unchaste Diana, which it holds out to public view without gospel sandals, were not sufficient to drive us back from this impure gospel to the pure gospel of Jesus Christ!

XIV. To conclude. The modish doctrine of Christian imperfection and death-purgatory is so contrived, that carnal men will always prefer the

purgatory of the imperfectionists to that of the Papists. For the Papists prescribe I know not how many cups of Divine wrath and dire vengeance, which are to be drunk by the souls of the believers who die *half* purged, or *three-parts* cleansed. These *half*-damned, or a *quarter*-damned creatures, must go through a severe discipline, and fiery salvation, in the very suburbs of hell, before they can be perfectly purified. But our opponents have found out a way to deliver half-hearted believers out of all fear in this respect. Such believers need not "utterly abolish the body of sin" in this world. The inbred man of sin not only *may*, but he *shall* live as long as we do. You will possibly ask, "What is to become of this sinful guest? Shall he take us to hell, or shall we take him to heaven? If he cannot die in this world, will Christ destroy him in the next?" No: here Christ is almost left out of the question, by those who pretend to be determined to "know nothing but Christ and him crucified." Our indwelling adversary is not destroyed by the brightness of the Redeemer's spiritual appearing, but by the gloom of the appearance of death. Thus they have found another Jesus; another Saviour from sin. The king of terrors comes to the assistance of Jesus's sanctifying grace, and instantaneously delivers the carnal

believer from indwelling pride, unbelief, covetousness, peevishness, uncharitableness, love of the world, and inordinate affection. Thus the clammy sweats, brought on by the greedy monster, kill, it seems, the tree of sin, of which the blood of Christ could only kill the buds! The dying sinner's breath does the capital work of the Spirit of holiness! And, by the most astonishing of all miracles, the faint, infectious, last gasp of a sinful believer blows away, in the twinkling of an eye, the great mountain of inward corruption, which all the means of grace, all the faith, prayers, and sacraments of twenty, perhaps of forty years, with all the love in the heart of our Zerubbabel, all the blood in his veins, all the power in his hands, and all the faithfulness in his breast, were never able to remove! If this doctrine be true, how greatly was St. Paul mistaken when he said, "The sting of death is sin, etc. Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Christ our Lord!" Should he not have said, *Death is the cure of sin*, instead of saying, "Sin is the sting of death?" And should not his praises flow thus: "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through DEATH, our great and only deliverer from our greatest and fiercest enemy, *indwelling sin*?"

CHAPTER VII.

ANSWER TO THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST CHRISTIAN PERFECTION DRAWN FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT.

HAVING proved that Christian perfection may be attained in this life, and having shown the dangerous tendencies of the opposite doctrine, we now turn to consider the arguments which are urged against our doctrine, drawn from different parts of the inspired volume. And first, we consider those which are adduced from the Old Testament.

“The heir, as long as he is a child—in Jewish nonage—differeth nothing from a servant, but is under tutors—and schoolmasters—until the time appointed by the Father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage; but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and stand in the—peculiar—liberty wherewith Christ hath made us—Christians—free.” Gal. iv. 1–5. But

this very passage, which shows that Jews are, comparatively speaking, in bondage, shows also that the Christian dispensation and its high privileges cannot be measured by the inferior privileges of the Jewish dispensation, under which Solomon lived; for the "law made nothing perfect," in the Christian sense of the word. And "what the law could not do, God, sending his own Son, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us—Christian believers—who walk after the Spirit," being endued with that large measure of it which began to be poured on believers on the day of Pentecost; for that measure was not given before, because "Jesus was not yet glorified." John vii. 39. But after "he had ascended on high, and had obtained the gift of the indwelling Comforter" for believers, "they received," says St. Peter, "the end of their faith, even the—Christian—salvation of their souls;" a salvation which Paul justly calls "so great salvation," when he compares it with Jewish privileges. Heb. ii. 3. "Of which—Christian—salvation," proceeds Peter, "the prophets have inquired, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you—Christians—searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them—according to their dispensation—did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ,

and the glory—the glorious dispensation—that should follow—his return to heaven, and the accompanying outpouring of the Spirit—unto whom—the Jewish prophets—it was revealed, that not unto them, but unto us—Christians—they did minister the things that are now preached unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.”

1 Pet. i. 9, etc. And among those things, the Scriptures reckon the coming of the spiritual kingdom of Christ with power into the hearts of believers, and the baptism of fire, or the perfect love, which “burns up the chaff” of sin, “thoroughly purges God’s floor,” and makes the hearts of perfect believers a “habitation of God through the Spirit,” and not a nest for indwelling sin. Hence, we conclude that as the full measure of the Spirit, which perfects Christian believers, was not given before our Lord’s ascension, it is absurd to judge of Christian perfection by the experiences of those who died before that remarkable event.

This might suffice to unnerve all the arguments which have been adduced from the Old Testament against Christian perfection. However, we will give them a brief consideration.

I. Solomon prays, and says: “If they sin against thee, (and there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them,” etc. 1 Kings viii. 46, etc.

[It is now fully settled by biblical criticism that the word here translated "sinneth," should be rendered "may sin;" that is, "there is no man that may not sin"—there is none so perfect as not to be liable to sin. And this is precisely the doctrine we teach.]

II. But Solomon also says: "There is not a just man on earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." Eccl. vii. 20.

[A similar answer gives a similar quietus to this. "There is no man, however just, however good his works, who is not liable to sin." This is enough for these two passages, so that it is not necessary to offer a number of reasons that might be adduced to show the unreasonableness and absurdity of the sense attributed to them by our opponents.]

III. But again: "Solomon asks, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin?" Prov. xx. 9.

We answer: No one can thus truthfully declare his native innocence or purity from sin; nor that, after having sinned, he has power to cleanse away his transgression. Yet in another sense, that man can say so in whom is answered the prayer of David: "Create in me a clean heart, O God;" or he who has obeyed the injunction of Paul: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh

and spirit;" the man who has a well-grounded hope of heaven, who, according to the testimony of John, "purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure;" he who is interested in the beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;" they, in fine, who have "purified their hearts by faith" in the blood of the everlasting covenant.

IV. Isaiah is next marshalled in the ranks of the imperfectionists, because he speaks of the "filthiness of our righteousness." But it is clear that when he says that "our righteousness is as filthy rags," he speaks not of the righteousness of humble faith, but of the unevangelical, Pharisaic righteousness of unhumbled professors, a "righteousness of unhumbled pride." Therefore, the objection drawn from this passage is utterly futile.

V. Isaiah says of himself: "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." Isaiah vi. 5.

True; but in the two following verses he also says, that a "live coal taken from off the altar touched his lips," as though he had said: The Spirit of God applied to his heart the blood of sprinkling—see Matt. iii. 11—seeing that this only could produce the result, for "his iniquity was taken away, and his sin was purged." This passage, then, instead of disproving Christian per-

fection, strongly proves the doctrine of Jewish perfection.

VI. Job, whom the Lord himself pronounces perfect, according to his dispensation—Job i. 8—is absurdly set upon demolishing Christian perfection, because he says, “If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me : if I say—in a self-justifying spirit—I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.” Job ix. 20.

God himself had pronounced Job perfect, according to his dispensation, and Job’s modest fear of pronouncing himself so does not at all overthrow the Divine testimony ; it only shows that this man of God was disposed to “let another praise him, and not his own mouth ;” and that the more we are advanced in grace, the more we are averse to whatever has the appearance of ostentation ; and the more deeply do we feel what Job felt when he said : “Behold, I am vile : what shall I answer thee ? I will put my hand upon my mouth.” Job xl. 4.

VII. But Job, far from mentioning his perfection, says : “Now mine eye seeth thee, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Job xlii. 6.

Perfect humility, perfect repentance, and perfect self-abasement, constitute essential parts of the perfection for which we contend. These words of Job, therefore, far from overthrowing our doctrine,

only show the growth and depth of Job's perfection, and that he had a taste of what Mr. Wesley prays for, when he says :

“ O, let me gain perfection's height,
O, let me into nothing fall,
As less than nothing in thy sight,
And feel that thou art all in all.
Confound, o'erpower me with thy grace;
I would be by myself abhorred:
All might, all majesty, all praise,
All glory, be to Christ my Lord !”

VIII. The words, “The stars are not pure, the heavens are not clean in thy sight: his angels he charged with folly,” Job xv. 15, 18, must be considered as proof that absolute perfection belongs to God alone—a truth which we constantly inculcate. If such passages overthrow the doctrine of perfection, they principally overthrow the doctrine of angelical perfection, which we all hold.

IX. Job asks, “What is man, that he should be clean? How can he be clean that is born of a woman? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” and answers, “Not one.” Job xv. 14; xiv. 4.

Here he evidently means, not one who is not possessed of infinite power. The Chaldee gives the correct meaning: “Who will produce a clean thing from a man, who is polluted with sins, except God, who is one?” Surely our opponents will not deny that the Omnipotent Immanuel can.

Thus we see how vain is the effort to enlist the holy men of either the Patriarchal or Mosaic dispensation in the cause of indwelling sin, that they may aid in depriving the Christian of the blood-bought privilege of "perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

CHAPTER VIII.

ANSWERS TO THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST CHRISTIAN PERFECTION DRAWN FROM THE EPISTLES OF ST. PETER AND ST. JAMES.

THE apostolic writers of the New Testament have been urged as opposing the doctrine of Christian perfection which we present in these pages.

I. As Peter, among the rest, has been appealed to, let him answer for himself.

1. When does that apostle plead for Christian imperfection and a death-purgatory? Is it where he says, "As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye *holy in all manner of conversation*. Seeing ye have purified your souls—love one another with a *pure heart* fervently. Christ left us an example that ye should follow his steps, who did no sin, who bare our sins, that we, being *dead to sin*, should live to righteousness; forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in

the flesh hath ceased from sin. The God of all grace, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect." Had Peter been against our doctrine, is it probable that he would thus have excited believers to attain perfection, wishing it them, as we wish our flocks the peace of God, which passeth all understanding?

2. If the apostle pleads not for the necessary indwelling of sin in his first Epistle, does he in his second? Is it where he says that "exceeding great and precious promises are given unto us, that by these we might be *partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped* the corruption that is in the world through lust?" Is there indwelling sin in the Divine nature? And can those people, whose hearts are still full of sin and indwelling pollution, be said to have "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust?" Might not a man, whose lungs are still full of dangerous ulcers, be said, with as much propriety, to have escaped the misery that is in the world through consumption? Is it where Peter describes Christian perfection, and exhorts believers to attain it, or to rise higher in it, by "adding, with all diligence, to faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity," the key of the arch and the bond of perfection? Or is it where

he bids us "be diligent that we may be found of God in peace, *without spot and blameless?*" For my part, I do not see here the shadow of a plea for the *root* of every evil in the hearts of believers till they die, any more than for the fruit of murder, lying, and theft, in their lives till they go hence.

3. But what principally strikes us in this appeal to St. Peter is, that although he was naturally led by his subject to speak of the *necessary* indwelling of sin in our hearts during the term of life, if that doctrine be true, yet he does not so much as drop one hint about it. The design of his first Epistle was undoubtedly to confirm believers under the fiery trials which their faith meets with. "You are kept," says he, "by the power of God through faith unto salvation, wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." What a fair opportunity had he here to say, without an *if need be*, "*Ye must* be in heaviness, not only through manifold temptations, but also through the remaining corruptions of your hearts: the Canaanites and the wild beasts must still dwell in the land, to be goads in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, or you would grow proud and careless. Therefore, until death comes to re-

lease you, your hearts must be full of indwelling sin." On the contrary, he writes, "Who shall harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? Commit your souls unto him in well-doing"—the very reverse of sinning. "Ye are his daughters—the daughters of him to whom God said, 'Walk before me and be thou perfect'—so long as ye *do well*, and are not afraid with any amazement;" that is, so long as your conduct and tempers become the gospel.

II. As St. Peter so strongly deposes against the doctrine of Christian imperfection, let us examine whether St. James pleads for Baal in the hearts, any more than in the lives, of perfect believers. "Let patience," says he, "have her *perfect work*, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein; he, being a doer of the work, shall be blessed in his deed." And again: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a *perfect man*." "If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well; but if ye have respect of persons—thereby not fulfilling this law—ye commit sin. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend—i. e., commit sin—in one point, he is guilty of all. So speak ye and

so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.”

It has been objected that St. James himself says: “In many things we offend all;” Jas. iii. 2; and that this abundantly proves that he was a strong imperfectionist.

[Answer. “Were we to suppose that where he appears, by the use of the plural pronoun, to include himself, he means to be thus understood, we must then grant that, although an inspired apostle, he himself was one of those *many teachers* who were to receive greater condemnation, verse 1: that he was a *horse-breaker*, because he said, ‘*we* put bits in the horses’ mouths that they may obey *us*,’ verse 3; that *his* tongue was a world of iniquity, and was set on fire of hell, for he says, ‘so is the tongue among *our* members,’ verse 6; that *he* cursed men, ‘wherewith curse *we* men,’ verse 9. No man, possessing common sense, can imagine that James, or any man of even tolerable morals, could be guilty of those things. But some of those were thus guilty to whom he wrote; and to soften his reproofs, and to cause them to enter the more deeply into their hearts, he appears to include himself in his own censure; yet not one of his readers would understand him as being a brother delinquent, for they knew that it was the

common mode of all teachers to include themselves in their addresses to their hearers." Dr. A. Clarke's Commentary *in loco*.]

But the interpretation of our opponents is put to the blush by the latter part of this very verse, which, according to one of the very plainest rules of biblical criticism, should be taken in connection: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." So certain, therefore, as there are men able to bridle their tongues and their whole bodies, there are men perfect in the body, perfect before death, as here taught by St. James. And there can be no good reason assigned why this latter remark was introduced, if the fact stated were an impossibility.

But St. James says also, "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy." James iv. 5.

[What has been said in the preceding paragraph about James's including himself with his hearers, applies with equal force to this, if the passage be taken in the sense of our translation. Besides, according to the testimony of St. Paul, "Charity," which is the spirit that dwelleth in true Christians, "envieth not," and the interpretation of our opponents would bring the apostles in direct collision. But one of the most eminent of biblical

critics says, "I think this verse should be understood as giving a contrary sense to that in our translation. Every genuine Christian is a habitation of the Holy Ghost, and that spirit, *πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ*, *excites desires against envy* : a man must not suppose that he is a Christian if he have an envious or a covetous heart."]

CHAPTER IX.

ST. PAUL WAS NOT AN IMPERFECTIONIST.

PETER and James did not plead more earnestly for the glorious liberty of God's children, than did Paul. Nay, he professed to have attained it, and addressed fathers in Christ as partakers of it together with himself. "We speak wisdom," says he, "among them that are perfect." 1 Cor. ii. 6. "Let us, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Phil. iii. 15.

Nor did the Apostle Paul imagine that Christian perfection was to be confined to the apostolic order, for he wanted all believers to be like him in this respect. Hence, he exhorted the Corinthians to "perfect holiness in the fear of God;" 2 Cor. vii. 1; to "be perfect;" 2 Cor. xiii. 11; to be "perfectly joined together in the same mind;" 1 Cor. i. 10; and showed them the perfect, or "more excellent way." 1 Cor. xiii. He told the Ephesians that God "gave pastors for the perfecting of

the saints, till all come, in the unity of the faith, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph. iv. 12, 13. He taught every man that he "might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Col. i. 28. He wanted the Colossians fully to "put on charity, which is the bond of perfection, that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Col. iii. 14; iv. 12. He would have the "man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work." 2 Tim. iii. 17. He exhorted his converts, "whether they did eat, or drink, or do any thing else, to do all to the glory of God, and in the name of the Lord Jesus; rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks;" that is, he exhorted them to walk according to the strictest rules of Christian perfection. 1 Thess. v. 16, 17, 18. He blamed the Hebrews for being such as "have need of milk, and not of strong meat," observing that strong meat—"ἐστὶ τελείων—belongeth to them that are perfect, even to them who, by reason of use—or experience—have their—spiritual—senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Heb. v. 12, etc. He begins the next chapter by exhorting them to "go on to perfection," intimating that if they did not, they might insensibly fall away, "put the Son of God to an open shame, and not be renewed again to re-

pentance." And he concludes the whole Epistle by a pathetic wish that the "peace of God would keep them perfect in every good work to do his will." Hence, it appears that it would not be less unreasonable to set St. Paul upon "crucifying Christ afresh," than to make him attack Christ's well-known doctrine, "Be ye—morally—perfect—according to your narrow capacity and bounded power—even as your Heavenly Father is—morally—perfect"—in his infinite nature and boundless Godhead. Matt. v. 48.

The objectors to our doctrine suppose it absurd, notwithstanding these pointed declarations, to represent St. Paul as a perfectionist, because he says, "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect." Phil. iii. 12. This objection is fully answered by the following statements:

God alone is absolutely perfect; yet all his works are perfect in their kind. Every sort of organic being is perfect, that is, perfectly adapted to its intended sphere. Yet each differs in its perfection. [From the diminutive mushroom to the mountain oak; from the poisonous tobacco seed to the most delicious fruit; from the minutest animalcule to the monster leviathan, all justify their Maker when, in reviewing his works, he pronounced them "all good," or perfect; for how could *He* have pronounced them so emphatically

good except they had been perfect?] So, also, we find angels and glorified saints perfect in their sphere; perfect devils and damned spirits, that is, spirits perfectly diabolical in all their attributes; perfect sinners, that is, men altogether sinful in their nature. And why, we ask, exclude the Christian, as the only being in the universe of God's creation totally unworthy to enter this list of perfect beings, especially as he is confessedly the object of God's peculiar care?

Again: All intelligent beings are morally perfect in proportion to their powers and light, unless perverted; the moral, as well as the natural, admitting of different degrees of perfection. The Scriptures all along present teachings and facts in support of this view. Enoch, in the gloomy dawn of spiritual light, was so perfect, that the inspired writer declares that he "walked with God, and was not, for God took him." So Noah was "perfect in his generation;" and Job, too, was "perfect;" yet no one supposes that, with their light, they had reached such heights on the mountains of holiness as were occupied by Elijah, or, in a still subsequent age, by Isaiah, from which his rapt vision caught the glowing rays that poured forth from the "excellent glory" of the coming kingdom of Messiah; yet the perfection of John the Baptist, as he approached still nearer to a com-

prehension of the wondrous scheme of redemption, far surpassed theirs; for Christ himself declares that John was greater—had attained a higher perfection—than any man who had ever preceded him. And still the perfection which was John's prerogative was far inferior to that which should be the privilege of the humblest Christian, during the full dispensation of the Spirit.

None, we presume, will pretend to dispute that the moral power which would arm a man for deliberate submission to years of imprisonment and to a death of torture and ignominy, and would inspire him, in the midst of all this, to raise an exulting song of triumph over his sufferings, is more excellent—more perfect—than that which would enable a man to “fulfil all righteousness” in the discharge of all the ordinary duties of Christian life. Nor will it, we suppose, be denied that the perfection of a saint in glory surpasses the perfection of a saint on earth.

With these considerations before us, we see no discrepancy in the apostle's profession of perfection—verse 15—and in his declaration that he was not yet perfect—verse 12. His own words, slightly paraphrased, are: “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord—that I may

know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death ; if, by any means, I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. For though I have long since been dead to sin, and have attained the moral perfection of Christianity, yet I earnestly desire that other perfection of suffering, of martyrdom, and of a glorious resurrection ; for I wish my body, as well as my soul, to be perfectly prepared for the highest enjoyments in heaven. I would not be understood to speak as though I had already attained the full knowledge of these things, or were already, as was my Master, ‘perfect through suffering ;’ but I follow after, if I may apprehend that for the attainment of which I am apprehended by Christ. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, or gotten possession of this perfection of suffering ; but this one thing I do—forgetting those sufferings and trials that are behind, lest, through weakness of the flesh, I faint by the way, and reaching forth, with intensely earnest desire, unto those things which are before, even to martyrdom itself—I press towards this mark for the prize—the subsequent crown—of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect in faith and love, be thus minded to suffer—if need be, to

die—for the cause of Christ, excited by a holy ambition to obtain as bright a crown as we can in heaven.”

It is further urged that the apostle of the Gentiles was a strong opposer of the doctrine of Christian perfection, because he says: “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” Gal. v. 17. And the conclusion is drawn from these words, that so long as we dwell in bodies of corruptible flesh, we cannot help breaking the law of liberty—at least, from time to time—by sinful lusts.

[The true meaning of this passage cannot, probably, be more clearly set forth than in the following collation of all that the apostle has said in this Epistle directly on this subject:

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel. O, foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? But after that ye have known God, or rather are known of him, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements? Where, then, is the blessedness ye spake of? My little children, of whom I travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you, I stand

in doubt of you, lest I have bestowed labor on you in vain. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would ; for ye are fallen from grace. Who did hinder you that ye did not obey the truth ? Be not deceived. God is not mocked. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption ; and they that do such things—as the works of the flesh—shall not inherit the kingdom of God. This I say, then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts—so that sin shall not have dominion over them. Röm. vi. 14.—Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am. God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live, I live by faith of the Son of God.” Gal. i. 6 ; iii. 1, 3 ; iv. 9, 15, 19, 11 ; v. 17, 4, 7 ; vi. 7, 8 ; v. 21, 16, 24 ; iv. 12 ; vi. 14 ; ii. 20.]

From these passages it is perfectly clear :

1. That he was addressing a Church that lived far below the full privileges of adult Christians ; and that he was urging them to leave their state

of spiritual infancy and carnal subjection, and attain a state of spiritual advancement, in which the flesh, i. e., the sources of sinful affections and lusts, being crucified, would be powerless for their spiritual detriment, and they would, consequently, be no more subdued and controlled by that which was dead.

2. What was peculiarly suited to them while in this state, cannot be considered the measure of attainment of all Christians, however devoted to the cause of Christ; for it is evidently wrong to judge of the experience of spiritual adults by that of these "carnal little children," well-nigh destitute, as we may conclude from the apostle's language, of spiritual life.

3. The context fully sustains our interpretation of this passage, and as fully refutes that which we oppose.

[4. If this verse contains the experience of all Christians, then none can reach heaven. For, says the apostle, after enumerating the "works of the flesh" which "lusteth against the Spirit," "they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Verse 21.]

5. The design of the Epistle is very evidently to free the Galatians from the corrupting influences of their self-constituted, judaizing teachers, who led them into the indulgence of acts and

tempers opposed to the works of the Spirit and the commands of Christ. This effect would have been completely thwarted by the advancement of such a sentiment as our opponents suppose this passage to inculcate.

CHAPTER X.

ST. PAUL NOT AN IMPERFECTIONIST—CONTINUED.

It is further objected that “the doctrine of Christian imperfection is not rested so much upon the experience of the Galatians as that of Paul himself, who, in Rom. vii., frankly acknowledges that he was still a ‘wretched, carnal man, sold under sin, and serving with the flesh the law of sin.’ It is, then, presumption to aspire after more perfection and a greater freedom from sin on earth than had been attained by St. Paul, who was ‘not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles, but labored more abundantly than they all.’”

[1. We have seen in the preceding chapter that Paul professed Christian perfection. And his discourses, writings, and life justify the profession, and approve it; for perfect repentance, perfect faith, and perfect love, such as he describes in 1 Cor. xiii., characterized his whole course: in other words, he showed himself to be a perfect Chris-

tian. If, then, the seventh of Romans does not mean something else, it clearly contradicts the profession and life of the apostle.

2. "The apostle often employs the first person singular where he is discussing general principles." 1 Cor. x. 23, 29, 30. "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. For why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I, by grace, be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?" See also 1 Cor. vi. 12; xiii. 11, 13: Gal. ii. 18, *et al.*, *sæpe*. A like perversion of passages, in which Paul, in a similar manner, uses the first person present, would make him say that he was a liar, Rom. iii. 7; that he had no charity, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, etc.

3. We conclude that, in his animated style, he speaks the experience of another, or his own past experience. This will yet more abundantly appear from the following collation of passages taken from the context in chapters vi., vii. and viii., and including the disputed passage, in which a direct anti-thesis is clearly manifest; showing, in the first column, the unconverted man struggling, through conviction of sin, for the light and power to relieve him from its slavery; in the second we perceive him, after being freed from its dominion, exulting in

his liberty. The relative power of the law, in the first column, and of the gospel, in the second, to rectify and sanctify the human heart, is also shown :

“For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died; and the commandment which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

“I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that I do not, but what I hate, that do I. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not, but the evil that I would not, that do I. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find, then, a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ—that we should bring forth fruit unto God. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held, that we should serve God in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

“For God be thanked that—though—ye were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness, and having now become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life; for when ye were the servants of sin—sold under sin—ye were free from righteousness. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death, that the righteousness of the law might be ful-

man—my reason and my conscience fully approve it—but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? For I am carnal. But they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh. For to be carnally-minded is death, because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God, for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die.” Rom. vii. 5, 8–11, 14, 15, 18–24; viii. 5–8, 13.

filled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

“I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord—I shall be delivered. There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. They that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit. But to be spiritually-minded is life and peace. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Therefore we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh. But if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live.” Rom. vii. 4, 6; vi. 17, 18, 22, 20; viii. 2; vii. 25; viii. 1, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13.

We give the following extracts, as irresistibly conclusive, from one of the most eminent biblical critics of the age, who is an opponent of the doctrine of Christian perfection as he understands it:

“Now to what special end of the apostle would it here be subservient, if we suppose him to be describing a *state of grace*, in chapter vii.? How does the contest in the breasts of Christians against sin, prove the inefficacy of the *law* to sanc-

tify them? For to prove such an inefficacy, it must be admitted, is the general object of the present discourse. The fact is, that such a statement would prove too much. It would show that *grace* is wanting in efficacy, as well as the *law*; for the Christian, being a subject of grace, and still keeping up such a contest, one might of course be tempted to say: 'It appears, then, that grace is no more competent than law to subdue sin and sanctify the heart.' And, indeed, why might he not say this, if the ground of all those who construe this of the *regenerate* man be correct? For what is the real state of the whole matter as represented by the apostle? It is, that in every contest here between the flesh and the Spirit—the moral man—the former comes off victorious. And can this be a *regenerate* state? Is this the 'victory which is of God, and overcometh the world?' 'He that is born of God sinneth not;' those that love his law 'do no iniquity;' he that loveth Christ 'keepeth his commandments;' that is, a habitual and voluntary offender such a one is not; he gives not himself up to any course of sin; it is his habitual study and effort to subdue his passions and obey the commandments of God. But what of all this is there in the case which the apostle presents in vii. 14–25? Read now chapter viii. 1–17, and then ask, Is the

man described in vii. 14-25, who yields in every instance to the assault of his passions, and suffers them continually to triumph over law, conscience, and every other consideration, such a man, or the same man, as is described in viii. 1-17? In this latter passage the man is described, 'who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Can this, then, be the same man who does walk after the flesh, and always does this, even when the voice of God and conscience are thundering in his ears, and his own internal moral nature is warning him against the course he pursues? Impossible. Light and darkness are not more diverse than these two cases.

"The transition which is represented as taking place, at the close of chapter vii. and the commencement of chapter viii., most wonderfully exhibits this. Here is, indeed, a wonderful transition: one from a state of captivity to the law of sin and death, to a state of freedom from both, to the enjoyment of the glorious liberty of the children of God. But if the contest in chapter vii. 14-25 is meant for one which is only in the breast of the *regenerate*; then into what state does he go, or what is the condition of him, who makes the transition represented in chapter viii.? The only answer which can be made seems to be, that it is from a state of strug-

gling with sin, to a state in which there is no struggle with it. Such a transition, then, in this case, [he speaks here as opposed to the doctrine of Christian perfection,] is utterly improbable; and, therefore, cannot be admitted.”—Stuart’s Commentary on Romans, *in loco*, p. 325.

“The most ancient fathers of the Church, without a dissenting voice, so far as we have any means of ascertaining their views, were united in the belief that an *unregenerate, unsanctified* person is described in Rom. vii. 5–25. And (so far as I know) all the evangelical commentators of the present time on the continent of Europe, most of the Episcopal Church, also, for many years, and not a few of the Scotch, Dutch, and English Presbyterian and Congregational divines, have adopted the same interpretation. I cannot but believe that the time is not far distant when there will be but one opinion among intelligent Christians about the passage in question; as there was but one before the dispute of Augustin with Pelagius.”—*Ib.*, Com. Rom., Excursus on Rom. vii. 5–25, p. 627.

The same view is sustained by Dr. Doddridge, in his “Lectures on Divinity.”]

If the sense which our opponents give to Rom. vii. 14–25, be true, the doctrine of Christian perfection is a dream, and our utmost attainment on earth is St. Paul’s *apostolic carnality*, and involun-

tary servitude to the law of sin, with a hopeful prospect of deliverance in a death-purgatory. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to establish our exposition of that passage against the arguments that are supposed to favor the interpretation given to it by our opponents.

Argument I. "St. Paul says to the Corinthians : 'I write not to you as to spiritual men, but as to carnal, even as to babes in Christ.' Now, if the Corinthians could be at once *holy*, and yet *carnal*, why could not St. Paul be, at the same time, an eminent apostolic saint, and a carnal, wretched man, sold under sin?"

Answer 1. The Corinthians were by no means established believers in general; for the apostle concludes his last Epistle to them by bidding them "examine themselves whether they were in the faith."

2. If St. Paul proved carnal still, and was to continue so till death, with all the body of Christian believers, why did he upbraid the Corinthians with their unavoidable carnality? Why did he wonder at it, and say : "Ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is yet among you envyings and strife, etc., are ye not carnal?" Might not these carnal Corinthians have justly replied, Carnal physician, heal thyself?

3. In the language of the apostle, *to be carnal*,

to be carnally-minded, to walk after the flesh, not to walk after the Spirit, and to be in the flesh, are phrases of the same import. This is evident from Rom. vii. 14; viii. 1-9: and he says indirectly, that to those who are in such a state there is "condemnation," that "they cannot please God," and that they are in a state of death, because to be "carnal," or "carnally-minded, is death." Rom. viii. 1, 6-8. Now, if he was carnal himself, does it not follow that he "could not please God," and that he was in a state of "condemnation and death?" But how does this agree with the profession which he immediately makes of being "led by the Spirit, of walking in the Spirit, and of being made free from the law of sin and death by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus?"

4. We do not deny that the remains of the carnal mind still cleave to imperfect Christians, and that when the expression *carnal* is softened and qualified, it may, in a low sense, be applied to such professors as those Corinthians were to whom St. Paul said: "I could not speak to you as to spiritual." But could not the apostle yet be spoken to as a spiritual man? And does he not allow that even in the corrupted churches of Corinth and Galatia there were some truly spiritual men—some adult, perfect Christians? See 1 Cor. xiv. 37, and Gal. vi. 1.

5. When the apostle calls the divided Corinthians carnal, he immediately softens the expression by adding, "babes in Christ." If, therefore, the word carnal be applied to St. Paul in this sense, it must follow that the apostle was but a "babe in Christ;" and if he was but a babe, is it not as absurd to judge of the growth of adult Christians by his growth, as to measure the stature of a man by that of an infant?

[6, and last. "The man described in Rom. vii. 14, is not only called carnal without any softening, qualifying phrase, but the word carnal is immediately heightened by an uncommon expression: "sold under sin," *i. e.*, "a bond slave to sin, and wholly devoted to his service, and obedient to his orders." Stronger language than this cannot well be found in the New Testament."*

Thus reason, Scripture, and criticism agree to set this argument aside.]

Argument II. "The carnal man whose cause we plead, says Rom. vii. 20. 'If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me,' *i. e.*, in my unrenewed part; and, therefore, he might be an eminent, apostolic saint *in his renewed part*, and a carnal, wretched man in his *UNRENEWED part*."

* Stuart on Romans, p. 619.

Answer 1. The apostle speaks as a carnal, yet awakened sinner, who has light enough to see his sinful habits, but not faith and resolution enough to overcome them. His meaning is evidently this : *If I, as a carnal man, do what I, as an awakened man, would not, it is no more I that do it*—that is, I do not do it according to my *awakened* conscience, for my conscience rises against my conduct—but *it is sin that dwelleth in me* ; it is the tyrant sin, that has full possession of me, as his slave, and minds the dictates of my conscience no more than an inexorable task-master minds the cries of an oppressed slave.

2. If the pure love of God was shed abroad in St. Paul's heart, and constrained him, he dwelt in love, and, of consequence, in God ; for St. John says : "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him : He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world." Now, if God dwelt in Paul by his loving Spirit, it becomes our objectors to show that an *indwelling God* and *indwelling sin* are one and the same thing ; or that the apostle had strangely altered his doctrine when he asked with indignation, "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" For if indwelling sin, the Belial within, was necessary to nestle with Christ in Paul's heart, and in the hearts of all believers, should not

the apostle rather have cried out with admiration :
“ See how great is the concord between Christ and Belial ! They are inseparable ! They always live so intimately together in the same heart, that nothing ever parts them but death, that severs all earthly ties ! ”

3. If reluctance to serve the law of sin be proof that we are holy, is there not joy in heaven over the apostolic holiness of most robbers and murderers in the country ? Can they not sooner or later say : “ *With my mind, or conscience, I serve the law of God ; but with my flesh, the law of sin. How to perform what is good, I find not. I should be honest, if it were not for the powerful inclination that I feel to act dishonestly, by which I am completely overcome. But I find a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me.* ”

[4, and finally. Philosophy denies, and the Scriptures confirm the denial, that man’s moral being is constituted of two totally diverse natures : that he may, at the same time, be right, and not right ; that he may, at once, serve God, and not serve him ; that he may love him while he hates him. Yet such must be the case, if the argument which we consider be valid.]

Argument III. “ The man whose experience is described in Rom. vii. is said to ‘ delight in the

law of God after the inward man, and to serve the law of God with the mind ;' therefore, he was partaker of apostolic holiness."

Answer. But he also says: "With the flesh I serve the law of sin." What else could Medea have meant, when, about to imbrue her hands in innocent blood, she cried out: "My mind—my reason and conscience—leads me one way, but my new, impetuous passion urges me another, against my will: I see the right and I approve it, and yet I pursue the wrong?" Did not Herod hear the word of God—*ἡδέως*—"with delight," and "did many things," too; Mark vi. 20; [and then, in cold blood, murder the minister of God from whom he had heard it?] But is this proof that either Herod or Medea had attained apostolic holiness? [We would rather ask, What stronger evidence could be adduced of a totally corrupt nature—the law of God, the force of enlightened reason, the urgent pleadings of conscience, coupled with fear of punishment and forfeiture of future happiness, all impelling to the right, and yet the inclination to do wrong completely triumphing over all? How, then, can it apply to the chief of the apostles?]

Argument IV. "The person who describes his unavailing struggles under the power of sin cries out at last, 'Who shall deliver me,' etc., and immediately expresses a hope of future deliverance,

thanking God for it, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Does not this show that the carnal man, sold under sin, was a Christian believer, and, of consequence, Paul himself?"

Answer. [Is it any uncommon thing to see a man whose reason is convinced that salvation is through Christ alone, and who in an awakened state earnestly desires it through him, before having obtained it? "A person sick of a fever," says Whitefield on this subject, "may desire to be in health, but that desire is not health itself." But could he ever obtain salvation without such previous experience? Has he not the faith that desires salvation before that which brings it? And when does he feel his depravity and guilt more sensibly than when on the threshold of saving faith? At first, he thanks God for anticipated deliverance; after that he "thanks God who *giveth* him the victory," since "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free from the law of sin and death."]

Argument V. "The apostle's plain confession shows that he was really carnal and sold under sin. For he says to the Corinthians that there was 'given him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations which had been vouchsafed him.'

2 Cor. xii. 7. Now, what could this thorn in the flesh be, but a sinful lust? And what this ‘messenger of Satan,’ but pride or immoderate desire? Thrice he besought the Lord that these plagues might depart from him, but God would not hear him. Indwelling sin was to keep him humble. And if St. Paul stood in need of that remedy, how much more do we!”

Answer 1. There is an entire destitution of evidence to establish this bare conjecture. The facts and probabilities are against it. Tertullian and Chrysostom inform us that the apostle was greatly afflicted with violent attacks of headache and extreme weakness; and it is of these that we understand the “thorn in the flesh and the messenger of Satan to buffet him,” *i. e.*, his physical infirmities. In like manner was Satan permitted to afflict Job; and to “bind a daughter of Abraham with a spirit of—physical—infirmity for eighteen years.” This was probably the cause of that “weakness of bodily presence,” and that “contemptibleness of speech”—2 Cor. x. 10—which gave occasion to his adversaries at Corinth to take undue advantage of him, and thereby they constituted themselves the “messengers of Satan to buffet him;” for these may be what he means by this phrase.

[But there are numerous other hypotheses, any

one of which is more probable than this which palms off on St. Paul an insuperable corruption, in the midst of his highest professions of holiness. Among these are, that his “thorn in the flesh” was a form of hypochondria, accompanied by a paralysis of the muscles of one side of the face, that caused an uncomely distortion of his countenance; or that it was stone or gravel; or, finally, that it was a disease of his eyes. This last view is supported by the facts that he required a travelling companion to accompany him in all his journeyings; that the services of an amanuensis were requisite when he would write an Epistle; that when he did write one with his own hand, though requiring the application of but a few hours, it was a matter of so extraordinary exertion that it called forth the exclamation, “See how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand!” Gal. vi. 11. And what additional emphasis does this idea give to the passage in Gal. iv. 13–15: “Ye know how, *through infirmity of the flesh*, I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation, *which was in my flesh*, ye despised not, neither rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is, then, the blessedness ye spake of? For I bear you record that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.”]

2. Paul says : “ There *was given* me a thorn in the flesh, lest I be exalted above measure for the abundance of the revelations,” etc. They were not indwelling sin, then ; for indwelling sin was not given him after his visions, seeing it stuck fast in him long before he went to Damascus. It is absurd, then, to say that God gave him the thorn of indwelling sin afterwards, or, indeed, that he gave it to him at all.

3. Indwelling anger keeps us angry, not meek ; indwelling pride keeps us proud, not humble ; and indwelling lust keeps us lustful, and not self-denying and temperate in all things. The child is as the parent. A salt fountain will not send forth fresh water.

4. While trying to make him out a modest imperfectionist, this argument represents Paul as an impudent Antinomian ; for, speaking of his “ thorn in the flesh,” and of these “ buffetings of Satan’s messenger,” he calls them his *infirmities* ; and says : “ Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my *infirmities*.” Now, if his infirmities were pride, a wrathful disposition, and filthy lust, did he not act the part of a filthy Antinomian, when he said that he “ gloried in them ? ” Would not even Paul’s carnal man have blushed to speak thus ? Far from glorying in his pride, wrath, or indwell-

ing lust, did he not groan, "O wretched man that I am?"

5. The apostle, still calling these things his infirmities, explains himself further in these words: "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in persecutions, etc., for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong. Christ's strength is made perfect in my weakness." That thorn, those buffetings, cannot, then, be indwelling sin, or any outbreakings of it; for the devil himself could do no more than take pleasure in his wickedness; and in Rom. vii. the carnal penitent himself "delights in the law of God after the inward man;" instead of taking pleasure in his indwelling sin.

Argument VI. "St. Luke informs us that the contention—*παροξυσμός*—was so sharp between Barnabas and Paul, that they departed asunder, the one from the other. Acts xv. 39. Now charity, *οὐ παροξύνεται*, is not provoked, does not contend. Strife or contention is one of the fruits of the flesh; and if St. Paul bore that fruit, I do not see why you should scruple to call him a carnal, wretched man, sold under sin."

We grant directly that if Paul acted uncharitably, he then fell from Christian perfection; for a man perfected in love may fall back from his high estate, and then recover it again. But this was

not the apostle's case. For every contention is not sinful. The apostle says himself: "Contend for the faith." "Be angry and sin not." "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." Jesus Christ did not break the law of love when he looked around with anger on the Pharisees, "being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." There is not the least intimation of Paul's having sinned in this affair. From the circumstances, there is not the slightest proof that Paul, in this matter, stained his perfection; for, by every rule of right, it was proper for him to refuse to take with him again, as a fellow-traveller and co-worker, one who had previously, in a cowardly manner, deserted them in the midst of labor and danger, and to insist upon it, so far as to refuse the companionship of Barnabas for some one else as good, rather than take along one who, he knew from painful experience, could not be depended upon.

CHAPTER XI.

ST. PAUL IS A STRONG ADVOCATE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

IF St. Paul's professed spirituality not only clears him of the carnality with which he is charged, but demonstrates the truth of our doctrine, we will present from his genuine, undoubted experiences, when he "taught wisdom among the perfect," a picture of the perfect Christian drawn at full length. It is a portrait of St. Paul, painted by himself, before the mirror of evangelical sincerity, with the pencil of a good conscience, and colors mixed by the Spirit of truth. Behold it, and admire!

"Be followers of me. This one thing I do: leaving the things that are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of the heavenly calling—a crown of glory. Charity is the bond of perfection. Love is the fulfilling of the law. If I have not charity, I am nothing." And what charity or love

St. Paul had, appears from Christ's words, and from his own. "Greater—*i. e.*, more perfect—love hath no man than this," says our Lord, "that he lay down his life for his friends." Now this love St. Paul had for Christ and for souls, yea, for the souls of even his fiercest adversaries, the Jews. Hear him: "The love of Christ constraineth us. For me to live is Christ, to die is gain. I long to depart, and to be with Christ. I count not my life dear unto myself, that I may finish my course with joy. I am ready not to be bound only, but to die also for the name of the Lord Jesus. If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all." And in the next chapter but one to that in which the apostle is supposed to profess himself actually "sold under sin," he professes perfect love to his sworn enemies; even that love by which "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them who walk after the Spirit." Hear him: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I could wish that myself were accursed, *i. e.*, made a curse, ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ, after the example of Christ, for my kinsmen according to the flesh;" meaning his inexorable, bloody persecutors, the Jews.

Nor was this love of Paul like a land-flood; it constantly flowed like a river. This living water

sprang up continually in his soul. Witness these words : “Remember that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears. Of many I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they mind earthly things ; for our conversation is in heaven. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world. I know nothing—*i. e.*, no evil—by—or of—myself. We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. Whether we are beside—*i. e.*, carried out beyond—ourselves, it is to God ; or whether we be sober—*i. e.*, calm—it is for your cause—*i. e.*, the love of God and man is the source of all my tempers. Giving no offence in any thing, but in all things approving ourselves as ministers of God, in much patience, by pureness, by kindness, by love unfeigned ; being filled with comfort, and exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. I will gladly spend and be spent for you ; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved—a rare instance this of the most perfect love ! We speak before God in Christ ; we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. I am crucified with Christ ; nevertheless I live ; yet not I—see here the destruction of sinful self!—but Christ liveth

in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God. As always, so now also shall Christ be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death; we worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Mark them who walk so as ye have us for an example. I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to abound and to suffer need; I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. Teaching every man in all wisdom, that I may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, whereunto also I labor, striving according to the working that worketh in me mightily."

The description of the perfect Christian, and of St. Paul, is so exceedingly glorious, and it appears to me such a refutation of the mistake which we oppose, that I cannot deny myself the pleasure, and my readers the edification of seeing the misrepresented apostle give his own lovely picture a few more finishing strokes. "We speak not as pleasing men," says he, "but as pleasing God, who trieth our hearts. For neither, at any time, used we flattering words. God is witness, nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. Being affectionately de-

sirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable to any of you. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you. The Lord make you abound in love one toward another, even as we do toward you. Thou hast fully known my manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience. I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day."

When I read this wonderful description of St. Paul written by himself, and see his doctrine of Christian perfection so gloriously exemplified in his own tempers and conduct, I am surprised that good men should still confound *Saul the Jew* with *Paul the Christian*; and should take the son of the "earthly Jerusalem, which is in bondage with her children," for the son of the "Jerusalem from above, which is free, and is the mother of us all who stand in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." In fact, it would be easy to show from their writings, that the good mistaken men who are most prejudiced against this doctrine, see it, sometimes, so true and so excellent, that, forgetting their

pleas for indwelling sin, they intimate that our daily petition may be answered, and that the "will of our Father may be done on earth as it is in heaven;" an expression, this, which includes the height and depth of all Christian perfection.

CHAPTER XII.

ST. JOHN IS A POWERFUL PLEADER FOR CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

ALL agree that it is not right to take a passage of Scripture from the context, and to attribute to it a meaning entirely inconsistent with it; yet such is the way in which 1 John i. 8 is forcibly torn from the context, and made to speak a language wholly averse to it, and to the design and general tenor of this Epistle, in order to compel the loving apostle to appear in the ranks of the imperfectionists, and to give in testimony by which the life of indwelling sin may be spared in the hearts of believers.

Says the apostle in the passage referred to, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "St. John here clearly pleads," say the imperfectionists, "for the indwelling of sin in us during the term of life; and he is so set against those who profess deliverance

from sin and Christian perfection in this life, that he does not scruple to represent them as *liars and deceivers*. This we think unanswerable.”

I. This interpretation is contrary to the *design* of the Epistle.

[Different classes of errorists had already infested the Church, opposed each to the other, and each equally opposed to the letter and spirit of true Christianity, as presented by the apostles. Some taught that we may be Christians, and yet continue in the daily commission of some of the grossest sins. Others taught that we are not such gross sinners after all; that many have lived and died without ever having sinned; consequently, that they need no such propitiation as Christ was represented by the apostles as having made. Mainly to meet these two classes of errorists was this Epistle written. To suppose him, then, in arguing against these Antinomian advocates of dwelling sin, in the very start to declare that their doctrine was founded in such everlasting truth that he who professed the opposite to be his experience was a liar of the grossest sort, were to suppose him guilty of the unaccountable folly of carefully procuring sand for the foundation upon which to build a most important edifice, providing against the possibility of accomplishing any thing by his argument before he had even stated it.]

II. The *context* is no less violated than the design of the Epistle. [By slightly transposing the context, so as to bring the corresponding passages into juxtaposition, without at all violating the meaning and force of any single passage—with an occasional remark between dashes—we may see how completely the context is violated by this interpretation.

“If we say that we have no sin—to be atoned for—we deceive ourselves, and the truth—of the gospel—is not in us.—I mean—if we say that we *have not sinned*—since we have lived in the world, and consequently have no need of propitiation by Christ—we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.—So then—if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and—not only so, but also—to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He that saith that he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another—*i. e.*, God with us and we with God—and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. But whoso

keepeth his commandments, in him verily is the love of God perfected : hereby know we that we are in him. But, little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not—so you perceive that I do not mean that you must continue in sin ; so far from this that I would have you to let the time past of your lives suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, and to understand that—he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments—*i. e.*, committeth sin—is a liar, and the truth is not in him. For whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, but he that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning.” Thus easily is the edge of this argument turned aside, and the apostle shown to wield a powerful sword for the destruction of this error.

If this interpretation of our opponents be true, it appears, 1. That the apostle strangely speaks against himself in the adjoining verses. 2. None are born of God ; all are children of the devil.]

If it should be alleged that “when John says, ‘the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin,’ he does not mean *all indwelling* sin ; because this is a sin from which death alone can cleanse us ;” we answer, that we demand the proof [that the whole does not include all its parts ; for the apostle says *all sin*, of which this statement excludes an essen-

tial part. We believe it an unscriptural exception to the manifest import of the plainest words ; and it cannot be accepted without full proof. 2. The reason assigned is clearly a begging of the question—giving that as a proof which is required to be proved.]

If it be urged that “the blood of Christ cleanseth us indeed from the guilt, but not from the filthiness of sin,” we reply, 1. That this is contrary to the text which says that “the blood of Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin.” 2. This cleansing from all sin is suspended upon our “walking in the light”—a doctrine repugnant equally to Protestantism and to Scripture, that is, if it means forgiveness ; for all know that they teach that our exercise of faith, and not our “walking in the light”—*i. e.*, our good works—is the only condition of pardon. 3. It is contrary to other scriptures, where cleansing undoubtedly refers, not to the *guilt*, but to the filthiness of sin. Ezekiel xxxvi. 25 presents one out of many instances : “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your *filthiness*, and from all your idols, will I *cleanse* you.” In 2 Cor. vii. 1, we have another : “Let us *cleanse* ourselves from all *filthiness* of the flesh and spirit ;” a thing that it is impossible for us to do, except as described by John, Rev. vii. 14 : “These are they that have

washed their robes, and *made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*"

When it is asserted that "in the expression before us—'the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin'—the meaning is not that he *radically* cleanses us, but that it only *begets and carries on* a cleansing from all sin, which cleansing will be completed in death;" we answer, 1. We demand the proof. 2. This assertion is open to all the above-mentioned difficulties. 3. It overthrows the doctrine of the Protestants, who have always maintained that nothing is absolutely necessary to eternal salvation, and, of consequence, to our perfect cleansing, but an obedient, steadfast faith, apprehending the full virtue of Christ's purifying blood; and to the word of inspiration, which declares—Acts xv. 9—"God, giving them the Holy Ghost, put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith"—not by death. 4. It is contrary to matter of fact; Enoch and Elijah having been translated to heaven, and, therefore, having been perfectly purified even in body, without having passed through this imperfectionist-purgatory. 5. But what is most objectionable in this evasive argument is, that it robs the blood of Christ of its sanctifying efficacy, thereby putting upon it the greatest contempt. It also puts the greatest cheat upon weak believers, who sincerely

desire to be now "made perfect in love," that they may worthily magnify God's holy name.

An illustration would here be in place. Suppose Christ now in this country healing all manner of diseases, as formerly in Judea. A benevolent person announces the fact to the invalids at the hospital. They believe it, and, by what means they can, they reach him who is performing the wonderful cures. They touch him; he touches them; but there is no cure. A slight, temporary relief is experienced by some, but the disease still continues. They complain to their supposed benefactor, that he had promised them a thorough cleansing from their disease. "True," is the response, "but I did not mean that you should be *radically* cleansed from disease, but that he would *begin* and *continue* the cleansing, and it is vain to expect a thorough cure till death interposes. So, bear your complaints as patiently as you can, till death fully relieves you." Could they go away enraptured and satisfied with the rich grace and godlike benevolence of such a physician?

III. [The whole tenor of this Epistle, so far from favoring this strange interpretation put by the opponents of Christian perfection upon one isolated passage, sustains our doctrine as strongly as language can; so much so that it seems to have been a favorite doctrine of the loving apostle, and he

seems to have had in view the fullest possible establishment of it in all the churches. Strange, how prejudice will pervert the plainest language! In connection with what has gone before, we have only to look, with an unprejudiced eye, at the following collation of passages from other parts of this Epistle, to set this matter in the clearest light.]

“He that loveth his brother abideth in the light—where the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin—and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. Every one that hath this hope in him, *puri-
fieth himself even as he*—Christ—is *pure*. Whoso committeth sin transgresseth also the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins—*i. e.*, destroy them root and branch—and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. Whosoever sinneth doth not—properly—see him, neither know him; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he—Christ—is righteous. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil—*i. e.*, sin in every shape.—Whosoever is born of God—whosoever is made partaker of God’s holiness, according to the perfection of the Christian dispensation—doth not commit sin—*i. e.*, doth not transgress the law—for his seed—the ingrafted word made quick and powerful by the indwelling

Spirit—remaineth in him; and—morally speaking—he cannot sin, because he is—thus—born of God. For if ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him;—and that he that doeth not righteousness, he that “committeth sin,” or transgresseth the law, is, so far, of the devil, for the devil transgresseth the law, that is, he sinneth, from the beginning. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness—*i. e.*, whosoever sinneth—is not of God.” 1 John iii. 3–11; ii. 29.

[Add to these strong, unequivocal statements the fact that, in this Epistle, John distinctly professes Christian perfection—1 John iv. 17—saying: “Herein *is* our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he—Christ—is—perfect in love, and, of consequence, without sin—so *are we in THIS WORLD*,” and we have the clearest demonstration that the Apostle John was very far from favoring the doctrine of the imperfectionists.]

CHAPTER XIII.

A SUMMARY OF THE WHOLE ARGUMENT.

[HAVING completed our arguments, offensive and defensive, and having, as we believe, conclusively proved that no doctrine is more clearly taught in the inspired volume than that for which we contend, it now only remains that we present a summary of the subject which we have been discussing.

I. There is such a thing taught in the word of God, and especially in the New Testament, as perfection. This is evident from the instructions given by our Lord to his disciples: "Be ye perfect;" Matt. v. 48; and from the doctrine of the apostles: "We wish even your perfection." 2 Cor. xiii. 9. "Let us go on unto perfection." Heb. vi. 1. This is thus rendered too plain to dwell longer on it.

II. It behooves us, then, to ascertain, with becoming humility, from the teachings of God's own

book, what this perfection is which he requires of us, since the history of the churches has proved how easy it is to wander from the right course, whenever the eye is even partially withdrawn from that pole-star by the influence of favorite theological theories. We are humbly of opinion that we have succeeded in finding the happy medium between an outward perfection of mere works that are seen of men, or a self-complacent resting in an experience that is far below the deep-searching and far-reaching requirements of the law of the Holy One, on the one hand; and, on the other, the despairing notion that it is something as far beyond the reach of the most holy on earth, however mightily assisted by Him "who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can either ask or think," as the New Jerusalem is above the Old. St. Paul says: "If I have not love, I am nothing;" and a greater than Paul has said: "On love hang all the law and the prophets." We conclude, then, that perfect love is the perfection of Christianity. "The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us," so as to rule all our actions, and completely subordinate our will to the will of our Father in heaven, constitutes the length and breadth, the height and depth of the requirements of the Divine law; and, of consequence, he who is under such

influence is a "perfect man in Christ Jesus." Hence, it embraces man's moral faculties, without extending, except by their reflex influence, indirectly and partially, to the intellectual and physical. Therefore it does not imply the destruction, in any sense, of the appetites, passions, or any other essential elements of human nature; but it does require their perfect control in accordance with the prohibitions and demands of the Divine law; that is, that they be kept in moderation, and not be improperly directed.

And here we feel constrained to allude to a gross error, which many Christians who profess to believe this doctrine have imbibed, greatly to the injury of its practical operation. They imagine that the emotions of a perfect Christian must be always in a state of high religious excitement. Without ecstasy, they suppose, there can be no perfection. "To be happy"—to use their favorite phrase for expressing this state—is indispensable to a high religious experience. Many, we are persuaded, have struggled into the light of perfect love, who, not finding a realization of these preconceived notions, have cast away their confidence in despair, or have striven on in useless, if not sinful, self-condemnation.

Such a state of constant excitement is surely impossible to human nature; nor do we suppose

it, in this life, desirable, as it would unfit us, partially at least, for the regular duties of our everyday vocations. But again : when the rain pours from the clouds in mighty abundance, it rushes, at first, in impetuous torrents down the mountain's side, roaring as distant thunder ; but approaching the plain, it becomes less and less impetuous, as it "goes from strength to strength;" the roaring ceases, the dashing waters gather into the placid stream, and at length subside into the quiet lake, whose depths are undisturbed by the rude gales that ruffle its surface. So with the Christian : at the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit, he is full of ecstasy ; as his experience gathers strength and depth, the rushing torrent is changed into the calmness of the majestic river, or the peaceful depth of the limpid lake, from which is reflected the resplendent form of his Saviour, as he walks quietly over its surface. True, it is at times raised into an unusual agitation by the odorous breezes which bear upon their bosom the perfumes of our heavenly Eden. But this, he knows, is only an occasional occurrence. He looks not on it as the *end* of his profession, but only as one of those seasons of extraordinary joy which his gracious Father sends, now and then, to cheer his heart along his toiling way.

III. Many objections have been urged against

these plain teachings of the Holy Spirit ; and that, too, strange as it may seem, by some of the best men that have lived ; many of whom, we doubt not, were enjoying at the time the possession of this promised heritage. We account for these strange inconsistencies by the help of the following considerations :

1. The Holy Spirit looks at the state of the affections, rather than at the opinions of the intellect ; at the confidence of the heart rather than at the belief of the head.

2. Their opposition originated in a misconception of the requirements of the Divine law, and in wrong views of Christian perfection ; and,

3. It is kept up by education, by prejudice, and by pride of consistency ; or, rather, by that natural aversion, of which every one is conscious, to changing one's opinions, especially on important subjects, and after they have been publicly expressed.

4. The inconsistent conduct of some who have professed it, has brought it into disrepute in many communities.

5. It has been so often caricatured, that many, even of its professed friends, have begun to suspect that the caricature is the reality. It has been so often burned in effigy, that the effigy is believed to be the thing itself.]

IV. We will close the argumentative part of this work with a brief statement of the main arguments by which we prove the glorious doctrine we contend for to be the doctrine of the word of God.

We begin, then, with Moses. He says—Deut. vi. 5, 6—“Hear, O Israel: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart”—to do them, as appears from the context. Any unprejudiced person will see from the context that Moses meant that this commandment should be kept personally by every Jew. He begins this chapter by saying, “Now these are the commandments which the Lord your God—yours through an evangelical covenant—commanded to teach you”—and not that your Mediator might do them for you. Deut. vi. 1. Two verses after, he adds: “Hear, O Israel, and observe to do—not, Hear, and another shall observe to do for you—that it may be well with thee.” Then comes in our capital precept of perfect love, which, a few verses below, Moses continues to enforce thus: “Ye shall not tempt the Lord your—covenant—God. Ye shall diligently keep the commands of the Lord your God, and his testimonies which He hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do that

which is right and good in the sight of the Lord thy God, that it may be well with thee. And when thy son asketh thee, saying, What mean these statutes?—of perfect love, etc.—then shalt thou say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out." This precious chapter ends with the following convincing statement: "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, that he might preserve us alive; and it shall be our righteousness—our gospel perfection—if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us."

Now, if Moses really spoke and wrote what he meant, it unavoidably follows, 1. That God really required of every Jew an evangelical and personal perfection of love, according to the degree of light and power imparted under the Jewish dispensation. 2. That this evangelical Jewish perfection of love was attainable by every sincere Jew, because whatever God requires of us in a covenant of grace, he graciously engages himself to help us to perform, if we believingly and obediently embrace his promised assistance. And, 3. That if an evangelical perfection of love was attainable under the Jewish gospel—for "the gospel was preached unto the Jews as well as unto us," although not so clearly, Heb. iv. 2—it is absurd

to say that the gospel of Christ requires less perfection, or makes less provision for Christians to attain what their dispensation calls them to.

[2. We prove our doctrine from the prophecies that this should be the state of the true Christian's experience under the full light of the Messiah's spiritual dispensation. We give one which must stand as a representative of all the rest. It is from Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

3. And in accordance with this prophecy, the announcing angel required that, at his advent, the Messiah's name should be called "Jesus"—or Saviour—because he should save his people from their sins. "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins. For, for this—*very*—purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," that is, sin in every sense, internal and external, indwelling as well as overt; so much so that "he that abideth

in him sinneth not," either inwardly or outwardly, for "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." 1 John iii. 5, 8, 6, 9.

His teachings, from his inaugural sermon on the mount, to his final discourse with his disciples around the table of the last supper, all show that his great object was to fulfil this anti-sinful, anti-satanic end of his mission.] "Think not," says he, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil; first, by perfectly obeying, myself, the two great moral precepts of Moses and the prophets; and, next, by teaching and helping all my faithful disciples to do the same. For verily I say unto you—that far from being come to destroy the law and the prophets, that is, the spirituality and the strictness of the moral part of the Jewish gospel—till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law—which Pharisaical glosses have unnerved—till all be fulfilled. And lest you should think that I speak of your fulfilling this law by proxy or imputation, I add: Whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and—by precept and example—shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:—if he have any place among my people in my spiritual kingdom, it shall be only among my carnal babes who are the least

of my subjects.—But whosoever shall do and teach them—the commandments whose spirituality I am about to assert—the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven—he shall be an adult, perfect Christian in the kingdom of my grace here; and shall receive a proportional crown of righteousness in the kingdom of my glory hereafter.” Matt. v. 17–19. And in the close of this chapter he says: “Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

If I am not mistaken, it evidently follows from these plain words of Christ, 1. That he taught a personal perfection and a sinless perfection, too. 2. That this perfection consists in not breaking, by wilful commission, the least of the commandments which our Lord rescued from the false glosses of Antinomian Pharisees, who rested on the imputed righteousness of Abraham, saying: “We have Abraham for our father; we are the children of Abraham; we are perfect in Abraham; all our perfection is in Abraham;” and from the no less false glosses of those absurdly legal Pharisees who paid the tithe of anise, mint, and cummin, with the greatest scrupulosity, while they secretly neglected mercy, truth, and the love of God. And, 3. That the perfection which Christ enforced upon his disciples was not merely of the negative kind, but of the positive also, since it consisted both in

doing and teaching the least, as well as the greatest, of God's commandments; all of which hang upon these two: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: this is the first and the great commandment. And the second is like unto it—in nature and importance—Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Matt. xxii. 35–40.

Agreeably to this doctrine of perfection, our Lord said to the rich young man: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments; if thou wilt be perfect, follow me" in the way of my commandments. "Love the Lord with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself; for blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may enter through the gates into the city, and have right to the tree of life, which is in the street of that city, on either side of the pure river of the water of life. This do, and thou shalt live" eternally in heaven. "Bring forth fruit unto perfection," according to the talent of grace and power which thou art intrusted with, and thou shalt "inherit eternal life; thou shalt receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him" with the love that keeps the commandments, and fulfils the royal law. Compare Matt. xix. 17; Luke x. 28; Rev. xxii. 2, 14; James i. 12; and Luke viii. 14.

The last of these discourses contains several exhortations to the performance of the two great commandments of perfect love, and concludes with a prayer in which is uttered a fervent petition to the Father to "sanctify his disciples through the truth," stating that that truth was his word. See John xvii. 17.

4. [As the Holy Spirit of inspiration cannot be charged with duplicity and insincerity, the apostles, who wrote under his direct influence, must really have indicated truly the mind of the Spirit when they wrote. If so, it is the will of God that we should be perfect: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thess. iv. 3. For,

(1.) Their writings abound in commandments that Christians should be holy, sanctified, or perfect, accompanying the command with the sanctions of a holy law: "Be ye holy. Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14.

(2.) The writings of the apostles are also full of exhortations to this effect: "Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, and

let us go on to perfection." Heb. xii. 1; vi. 1. "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. vii. 1.

(3.) The apostles prayed with great fervor and apparent faith for this blessing upon the churches. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. v. 23. "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Heb. xiii. 20, 21. "For this cause I bow my knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the

love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Eph. iii. 14-19. Now, a candid consideration of these prayers forces us to the conclusion that the perfection of Christianity, for which the apostle prays in these and in numerous other passages, might be conferred on those for whom he prayed; or the following consequences are irresistibly pressed upon us: either that the apostles were ignorant of the true doctrine, believing and teaching a falsehood; or they were knowingly guilty of falsehood; or they were guilty of hypocrisy, and were making use of the most appropriate means to convince those to whom they wrote that they believed what they did not, and were guilty also of mockery in praying to God for what they knew he could not, or would not, grant; and, moreover, that the Holy Spirit is chargeable with insincerity in inspiring prayers which he intended should not be answered, and of exciting hopes merely for the gratification of seeing them blighted.

(4.) The promises contained in their Epistles are equally satisfactory. Says St. Peter: "Exceeding great and precious promises are given unto us, that by these we might be partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter i. 4. A

glorious purpose, indeed, which has, without doubt, been accomplished in the hearts and lives of all who have fully believed those promises. Again: The prayer which we have just quoted from 1 Thess. v. 23, concludes, in the following verse, with this assurance: "Faithful is He that calleth you—who hath promised your entire sanctification, and the preserving of your whole spirit, and soul, and body, blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ—*who also will do it.*" We conclude with the doxology which closes the prayer, quoted from Eph. iii. 20, 21: "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we either ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

5. The apostles were greatly mistaken as to the object of their mission and ministry, if the doctrine that Christians may be perfect, even in this life, be not true. For St. Paul declares that "He—Christ—gave some, apostles; some, prophets; some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of

God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph. iv. 11-13.

6. The great apostle of the Gentiles and the apostle of love both very grossly erred, when they professed, for themselves and others, to have obtained this perfection, when one says: "*Herein is our love made perfect*"—1 John iv. 17—and the other says: "*As many of us as be perfect, let us be thus minded.*" Phil. iii. 15.]

I have set before thee, reader, the lights and shades of our doctrine; I have produced our arguments and those of our opponents, and now say, which of them bears the stamp of imperfection? If thou pronounce that Urim and Thummim, light and perfection, belong to the arguments of our opponents, I must lay by my pen, and deplore the infelicity of our having a reason which unsays in my breast what it says in thine. But if thou find, after mature deliberation, that our arguments are "*light in the Lord,*" as being more agreeable to the dictates of unprejudiced reason than those of our antagonists, more conformable to the plain declarations of the sacred writers, more fit to encourage believers in the way of holiness, more suitable to the nature of undefiled religion, and better adapted

to the display of the Redeemer's glory, I shall enjoy the double pleasure of embracing the truth, and of embracing it together with thee.

And now, having closed my arguments, I beg your favorable attention to a few practical addresses on the subject.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ADDRESS TO PERFECT CHRISTIAN PHARISEES.

I ADDRESS you first, ye perfect Christian Pharisees, because ye are most ready to profess Christian perfection, though, alas! ye stand at the greatest distance from perfect humility, the grace which is most essential to the perfect Christian's character; and because the enemies of our doctrine make use of you first when they endeavor to root it up from the earth.

That ye may know whom I mean by *perfect Christian Pharisees*, give me leave to show you your own picture, in the glass of a plain description. Ye have, *professedly*, entered into the fold where Christ's sheep, which are perfected in love, rest all at each other's feet, and at the feet of the Lamb of God. But how have ye entered? By "Christ the door," or at the door of presumption? Not by Christ the door; for Christ is meekness and lowliness manifested in the flesh; but ye are

still ungentle and fond of praise. When he pours out his soul as a Divine Prophet, he says : " Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart ; take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." But ye overlook this humble door. Your proud, gigantic minds are above stooping low enough to follow Him " who made himself of no reputation," that he might raise us to heavenly honors ; and who, to pour just contempt upon human pride, had his first night's lodgings in a stable, and spent his last night partly on the cold ground, in a storm of Divine wrath, and partly in an ignominious confinement, exposed to the greatest indignities which Jews and Gentiles could pour upon him. He rested his infant head upon hay, his dying head upon thorns. A manger was his cradle, and a cross his death-bed. Thirty years he travelled from the sordid stable to the accursed tree, unnoticed by his own peculiar people. In the brightest of his days, poor fishermen, some Galilean women, and a company of shouting children, formed all his retinue. Shepherds were his first attendants, and malefactors his last companions.

His first beatitude was, " Blessed are *the poor in spirit* ;" and the last, " Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

His first doctrine was, "Repent;" nor was the last unlike to it: "If I have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. He that will be first among you, let him be the least of all." Now, far from practicing with godly sincerity this last lesson of our humble Lord, you do not so much as truly relish the first. Ye do not delight in, nay, ye abhor, penitential poverty of spirit. Your humility is not cordial, and wrought into your nature by grace; but complimentary, and woven into your carriage by art. Ye are humble in looks, in gestures, in voice, in dress, in behavior—so far as external humility helps you to secure the reputation of perfect Christians, at which ye aspire from a motive of Pharisaic ambition; but ye continue strangers to the childlike simplicity and unaffected lowliness of Christ's perfect disciples. Ye are the very reverse of those "Israelites in whom there is no guile." Ye resemble the artful Gibeonites, who, for a time, imposed upon Joshua's artless simplicity. Your feigned profession of special grace deceives those of God's children who have more of the simplicity of the dove than of the serpent's wisdom. Ye choose the lowest place, but ye do not love it. If ye cheerfully take it, it is not among your equals, but among your inferiors;

because you think that such a condescending step may raise the credit of your humility, without endangering your superiority. If ye stoop, and go down, it is not because ye see yourselves unworthy of the seat of honor; but because ye hope that people will by-and-by say to you, Come up higher. Your Pharisaic cunning aims at wearing at once the coronet of genuine humility, and the crown of self-exalting pride. Ye love to be esteemed of men for your goodness and devotion: ye want to be admired for your exactness, zeal, and gracious attainments. The pride of the Jewish Pharisees was coarse in comparison of yours. They wore the rough garment, and you wear the silks, of spiritual vanity; and even when ye dye them in the blood of the Lamb, which you extol in word, it is to draw the confidence of humble Christians by your Christian appearance and language, more than to follow the propensity of a new nature, which loves to be clothed with humility, and feels itself in its own centre when it rests in deep poverty of spirit, and sees that God is "all in all."

One of the greatest ends of Christ's coming into the world was to empty us of ourselves, and to fill us with humble love; but ye are still full of yourselves and void of Christ, that is, void of humility incarnate. Ye still aim at some wrong mark:

whether it be self-glory, self-interest, self-pleasure, self-party, or self-applause. In a word, one selfish scheme or another, contrary to the pure love of God and of your neighbor, secretly destroys the root of your profession, and may be compared to the unseen worm that ate the root of Jonah's gourd. Ye have a narrow, contracted spirit: ye do not gladly sacrifice your private satisfaction, your interest, your reputation, your prejudices, to the general interest of truth and love, and to the public good of the whole body of Christ. Ye are in secret bondage to men, places, and things. Ye do not heartily entertain the wisdom from above, which is pure, gentle, easy to be entreated, and full of mercy. Nay, ye are above conviction; gross sinners yield to truth before you. Like Jehu, ye are zealous, and ye pretend that it is for the Lord of hosts; but, alas! it is for your opinions, your party, your honor. In a word, ye do not walk in constant, solemn expectation of death and judgment; your will is not broken; your carnal confidence is yet alive; the heavenly dove does not sit in your breast; self, wrapped up in the cloak of humility, is still set up in your hearts, and in secret you serve that cursed idol more than God. Satan, transformed into an angel of light, has artfully led you to the profession of Christian perfection through a circle of external performances,

through glorious forms of doctrine in the letter, and through a fair show of zeal for complete holiness : the Lord, to punish your formality, has in part given you up to your delusion ; and now ye as much believe yourselves perfect Christians, as the Pharisees, in our Lord's day, believed themselves perfect Jews.

Mr. Wesley, in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, has borne his faithful testimony against such witnesses of perfect love as ye are. If ye despise this address, regard his remarks : "Others," says he, "who think they have the direct witness of their being renewed in love, are nevertheless manifestly wanting in the fruit. Some are undoubtedly wanting in *long-suffering*, Christian resignation. They do not see the hand of God in whatever occurs, and cheerfully embrace it. They do not 'in every thing give thanks, and rejoice evermore.' They are not happy ; at least, not always happy. For sometimes they complain. They say, 'This is hard !' Some are wanting in *gentleness*. They resist evil, instead of turning the other cheek. They do not receive reproach with gentleness ; no, nor even reproof. Nay, they are not able to bear contradiction without the appearance, at least, of resentment. If they are reproved, or contradicted, though mildly, they do not take it well. They behave with more distance and re-

serve than they did before, etc. Some are wanting in *goodness*. They are not kind, mild, sweet, amiable, soft, and loving at all times in their spirit, in their words, in their look, in their air, in the whole tenor of their behavior; not kind to all, high and low, rich and poor, without respect of person—particularly to them that are out of the way, to opposers, and to those of their own household. They do not long, study, endeavor, by every means, to make all about them happy. Some are wanting in *fidelity*, a nice regard to truth, simplicity, and godly sincerity. Their love is hardly ‘without dissimulation:’ something like guile is found in their mouth. To avoid roughness, they lean to the other extreme. They are smooth to an excess, so as scarce to avoid a degree of fawning. Some are wanting in *meekness*, quietness of spirit, composure, evenness of temper. They are up and down, sometimes high, sometimes low; their mind is not well balanced. Their affections are either not in due proportion—they have too much of the one, too little of the other—or they are not duly mixed and tempered together so as to counterpoise each other. Hence there is often a jar. Their soul is out of tune, and cannot make the true harmony. Some are wanting in *temperance*. They do not steadily use that kind and degree of food which they know, or might

know, would most conduce to the health, strength, and vigor of the body. Or they are not temperate in sleep: they do not rigorously adhere to what is best for body and mind. They use neither fasting nor abstinence," etc.

I have described your delusion; but who can describe its fatal consequences? Who can tell the mischief it has done and continues to do? The few sincere perfectionists, and the multitude of captious imperfectionists, have equally found you out. The former are grieved for you, and the latter triumph through you.

When the sincere perfectionists consider the inconsistency of your profession, they are ready to give up their faith in Christ's all-cleansing blood, and their hope of getting a clean heart in this life. They are tempted to follow the multitude of professors, who sit down in self-imputed righteousness, or in Solifidian notions of an ideal perfection in Christ, [or in Laodicean indifference to the attainment of what they profess to believe.] And it is well if some of them have not already yielded to the temptation, and begun to fight against the hopes which they once entertained of loving God with all their hearts. It is well if some, through you, have not been led to say: "I once sweetly enjoyed the thought of doing the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven. Once I hopefully

prayed God would 'so cleanse my heart that I might perfectly love and worthily magnify his holy name' in this world. But now I have renounced my hopes, and I abhor the doctrine of evangelical perfection. When I was a young convert, I believed that Christ could really make an end of all moral pollution, cast out the man of sin, and cleanse us from the sins of the heart as well as from outward iniquity in this life; but I soon met with unhumbled, self-willed people, who, boldly standing up for this glorious liberty, made me question the truth of the doctrine. Nay, in process of time, I found that some of those who most confidently professed to have attained this salvation, were further from the gentleness, simplicity, catholic spirit, and unfeigned humility of Christ, than many believers, who had never considered the doctrine of Christian perfection. These offences striking in with the disappointment which I myself met with, in feebly seeking the pearl of perfect love, made me conclude that it can no more be found than the philosopher's stone, and that they are all either fools or knaves who set believers upon seeking it. And now I everywhere decry the doctrine of perfection as a dangerous delusion. I set people against it wherever I go; and my zeal in this respect has been attended with the greatest success. I have damped the hopes

of many perfectionists! And I have proselyted several to the doctrine of Christian imperfection. With them I now quietly wait to be purified from indwelling sin in the article of death, and to be made perfect in another world."

This is, I fear, the language of many hearts, although it is not openly spoken by many lips. Thus are you, O ye perfect Pharisees, the great instruments by which the tempter tears away the shield of those unsettled Israelites, who look more at your inconsistencies than they do at the beauty of holiness, the promise of God, the blood of Christ, and the power of the Spirit.

But this is not all: as ye destroy the budding faith of sincere perfectionists; so ye strengthen the unbelief of the opposers of this doctrine. Through you their prejudices are grown up into a fixed detestation of Christian perfection. Ye have hardened them in their error, and furnished them with plausible arguments to destroy the truth which ye contend for. Did ye never hear their triumphs? "Ha! ha! So would we have it! These are some of the people who stand up for sinless perfection! They are all alike. Did not I tell you that you would find them out to be no better than temporary monsters? What monstrous pride! What touchiness, obstinacy, bigotry, and stoicism characterize them! How do they

strain at gnats and swallow camels ! I had rather be an open drunkard than a perfectionist. Publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before them." These are the cutting speeches to which your glaring inconsistency, and the severe prejudices of our opponents, give birth. Is it not deplorable that your tempers should thus drive men to abhor the doctrine which your lips recommend ?

And what do you get by thus dispiriting the real friends of Christian perfection, and by furnishing its sworn enemies with such sharp weapons against it ? Think ye that the mischief ye do shall not recoil upon yourselves ? Is not Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ? If he detested the perfect Pharisaism of unhumiliated Jews, will he admire the perfect self-righteousness of aspiring Christians ? If he formerly "resisted the proud, and gave grace to the humble," what reason have ye to hope that he will submit to your spiritual pride, and reward your religious ostentation with a crown of glory ? Ye perhaps cry out against Antinomianism, and I commend you for it ; but are ye not deeply tainted with the worst sort of Antinomianism—that which starches, stiffens, and swells the soul ? Ye justly bear your testimony against those who render the law of Christ of none effect to believers, by degrading it

into a rule which they have stripped of the punitive and remunerative sanctions with which it stands armed in the sacred records. But are ye not doubly guilty, who maintain that this law is still in force as a law, and nevertheless refuse to pay it sincere, internal obedience? For when ye break the first commandment of Christ's evangelical law, by practically discarding penitential "poverty of spirit;" and when ye transgress the last, by abhorring the lowest place, by disdaining to "wash each other's feet," and by refusing to "prefer others in honor before yourselves;" are ye not guilty of breaking all the law by breaking it in one point—in the capital point of humble love, which runs through all the parts of the law, as vital blood does through all the parts of the body? O how much more dangerous is the case of an unhumiliated man, who stiffly walks in robes of self-made perfection, than that of an humble man who, through prejudice and the force of example, meekly walks in robes of self-imputed righteousness!

Behold, thou callest thyself *a perfect Christian*, and retest in the evangelical law of Christ, which is commonly called the gospel: thou makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, even the way of Christian perfection, being instructed out of the gospel; and art confident that "thou thyself art

a guide of the blind, a light of them who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes," or imperfect believers; having the form of knowledge and of the truth in the gospel. Thou, therefore, who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest another should not break the law of Christ, through breaking it dishonorest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed through you among those who seek an occasion to blaspheme it. Romans ii. 17, etc. And think ye that ye shall escape the righteous judgment of God? Has Christ no woes but for the Jewish Pharisees? O be no longer mistaken! Consider well, before ye are punished by being here given up to a reprobate mind, and by being hereafter cast into the hell of hypocrites, the outer darkness where there will be more weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth than in any other hell! Before ye are overtaken by the awful hour of death, and the dreadful day of judgment, practically learn that Christian perfection is the mind which was in Christ, especially his humble, meek, quiet mind; his gentle, free, loving spirit. Aim at it by sinking into deep self-abhorrence; and not by using, as ye have hitherto done, the empty talk and profession of Christian perfection as a step to reach the top of spiritual pride.

Mistake me not: I do not blame you for hold-

ing the doctrine of Christian perfection, but for wilfully missing the only way that leads to it: I mean the humble, meek, and loving Jesus, who says: "I am the way, and the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved into so great salvation. He that entereth not by this door into this sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, [and especially he that climbeth by the way of Pharisaic formality,] the same is a thief and a robber:" he robs Christ of his glory, and pretends to what he has no more right to than a thief has to your property. Would ye then be right? Do not cast away the doctrine of sinless holiness; but contend more for it with your heart than with your lips. With all your soul, press after such a perfection as Christ, St. Paul, and St. John taught and exemplified—a perfection of meekness and humble love. Earnestly believe all the woes which the gospel denounces against self-righteous Pharisees, and all the blessings which it promises to perfect penitents. Drink less into the letter, and more into the Spirit of Christ, till, like a fountain of living water, it spring up to everlasting life in your heart. Ye have climbed to the Pharisaic perfection of Saul of Tarsus, when, "touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless." Would ye now attain the evangelical perfection which he was possessed of when he said: "Let

us, as many as are perfect, be thus minded?" Only follow him through the regeneration; fall to the dust before God; rise conscious of the blindness of your heart, meekly deplore it with penitential shame; and if you follow the directions laid down in the third address, I doubt not but, dangerous as your case is at present, you will be, like St. Paul, as eminent for Christian perfection as you have hitherto been for Pharisaic formality.

CHAPTER XV.

AN ADDRESS TO PREJUDICED IMPERFECTIONISTS.

I FEAR that, next to the persons whom I have just addressed, ye injure the cause of holiness, O ye believers who have been deluded into doctrinal Antinomianism, by the bad arguments which are answered in the preceding pages. Permit me, therefore, to address you next; nor suffer prejudice to make you throw away this expostulation, before you have granted it a fair perusal.

Ye directly or indirectly plead for the necessary continuance of indwelling sin in your own hearts, and in the hearts of all true Christians. But may I be so bold as to ask, Who gave you leave so to do? And when were ye commissioned to propagate this unholy gospel? Was it at your baptism, when ye were ranked among Christ's soldiers, and received a Christian name, in token that ye would "keep God's holy will and commandments all the days of your life?" And that you

would “not be ashamed to fight manfully against *the world, the flesh, and the devil*, unto your life’s end?” Are not these three enemies strong enough sufficiently to exercise your patience, and to try your warlike skill to the last? Did you promise that you would quarter a fourth enemy, called indwelling sin, in your very breast, lest ye should not have enemies enough to fight against? On the contrary, were ye not exhorted “utterly to abolish the whole body of sin?” If so, is it not strange that ye should spend part of your precious time in pleading, under various pretexts, for the preservation of heart-sin—a sin, this, which gives life, warmth, and vigor to the whole body of sin? And is it not deplorable that, instead of conscientiously fulfilling your baptismal engagements, ye should attack those who desire to fulfil them by seeking to have “the whole body of sin” utterly abolished?

How can ye, in all your confessions and sacramental offices, renounce sin, the accursed thing which God abhors, and which obedient believers detest, and yet plead for its life, its strength, its constant energy, so long as we are in this world? We could better bear with you if ye appropriated a hand or a foot, an eye or an ear, to sin, during the term of life; but who can bear your pleas for the necessary continuance of sin *in the heart*? Is

it not enough that this murderer of Christ, and of all mankind, rambles about the walls of the city? Will ye still insinuate that he must have the citadel to the last, and keep it garrisoned with filthy lusts, base affections, bad tempers, or “diabolonians,” who, like prisoners, show themselves at the grate; and, “like snakes, toads, and wild beasts, are the fiercer for being confined?” Who has taught you thus to represent Christ as the keeper, and not the destroyer, of our corruptions? If believers be truly willing to get rid of sin, but cannot, because Christ has bolted their hearts with an adamant decree, which prevents sin from being turned out; if he have irrevocably given leave to indwelling sin to quarter for life in every Christian’s heart, as the King of France once gave leave to his dragoons to quarter for some months in the houses of the poor, oppressed Protestants, who does not see that Christ may be called *the protector of indwelling sin*, rather than its *enemy*?

Ye absurdly complain that the doctrine of Christian perfection does not exalt our Saviour, because it represents him as radically saving his obedient people from their indwelling sin in this life. But are ye not guilty of the very error which ye charge upon us, when ye insinuate that he cannot, or will not, say to our inbred sins: “Those mine enemies which will not that I should reign over

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them, bring hither and slay them before me?" If a common judge has power to pass sentence of death upon all the robbers and murderers who are properly prosecuted; and if they are hanged and destroyed in a few days, weeks, or months, in consequence of his sentence, how strangely do ye reflect upon Christ, and revive the Agag within us, when ye insinuate that he, the Judge of all, who was "manifested for this very purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil," so far forgets his errand that he never destroys indwelling sin in one of his willing people, so long as they are in this world, although that sin is the capital and most mischievous "work of the devil?"

Your doctrine of the necessary continuance of indwelling sin in all faithful believers traduces not only the Son of man, but also the adorable Trinity. The Father gives his only-begotten Son, his Isaac, to be crucified, that the ram, sin, may be offered up and slain. But you insinuate that the life of that cursed ram is secured by a decree, which allots it the heart of all believers for a safe retreat, and a warm stable, so long as we are in this world. You represent the Son as an almighty Saviour, who offers to "make us free" from sin; and yet appoints that the galling yoke of indwelling sin shall remain tied to, and bound upon, our very hearts for life. Ye describe the Holy Ghost as a

Sanctifier, who applies Christ's all-cleansing blood to the believer's heart, filling it with the oil of holiness and gladness; and yet ye suppose that our hearts must necessarily remain "desperately wicked," and full of indwelling sin! Is it right to pour contempt upon Christianity, by charging such inconsistencies upon Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

It can hardly be expected that those who thus misrepresent their God, should do their neighbor justice. Hence the liberty which ye take to fix a blot upon the most holy characters. What have the prophets and apostles done to you that ye should represent them, not only as *men who had hearts partly evil to the last*, but also as *advocates for the necessary indwelling of sin in all believers till death*? And why do ye so eagerly take your advantage of holy Paul in particular, and catch at a figurative mode of speech, to insinuate that he was "a carnal wretch, sold under sin," even when he expected "a crown of righteousness at the hand of his righteous Judge," for having "finished his course with the just men made perfect?" Nay, what have we done to you, that ye should endeavor to take from us the greatest comfort we have in fighting against the remains of sin? Why will ye deprive us of the pleasing and purifying hope of taking the Jericho which we encompass, and

killing the Goliath whom we attack? And what has indwelling sin done for you, that ye should still plead for the propriety of its continuance in our hearts? Is it not the root of all outward sin, and the spring of all the streams of iniquity, which carry desolation through every part of the globe? If ye hate the fruit, why do ye so eagerly contend for the necessary continuance of the root? And if ye favor godliness, (for many of you undoubtedly do,) why do you put such a conclusive argument as this into the mouths of the wicked: "These good men contend for the propriety of indwelling sin, that grace may abound; and why should we not plead for the propriety of outward sin, for the same important reason? Does not God approve of an honest heart, which scorns to cloak the inward iniquity with outward demureness?"

Mr. Rowland Hill has published an ingenious dialogue, called *A Lash to Enthusiasm*, in which (p. 26) he uses an argument against pleading for lukewarmness, which, with very little variation, may be retorted against his plea for indwelling sin: "Suffer me," says he, "to put the sentiments of such persons [as plead for the middle way of lukewarmness] into the form of a prayer, which we may suppose would run in some such expressions as the following: 'O Lord, thy word requires that

I should love thee with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength; that I should renounce the world, [and indwelling sin,] and should present myself as a holy, reasonable, and lively sacrifice unto thee; but, Lord, these are such over-righteous extremes [and such heights of sinless perfection] as I cannot away with; and, therefore, grant that thy love, and a moderate share of the love of the world, [or of indwelling sin,] may both reign [or at least continue] in my heart at once. I ask it for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.'” Mr. Hill justly adds: “Now, dear madam, if you are shocked at such a petition, consider that it is the exact language of your own heart while you can plead for what you call *the middle way of religion*.” And I beg leave to take up his own argument, and to add, with equal propriety: “Now, dear sirs, if you are shocked at such a petition, consider that it is the exact language of your own heart, while ye can plead for what ye call *indwelling sin*, or *the remains of sin*.”

Nor can I see what ye get by such conduct. The excruciating thorn of indwelling sin sticks in your hearts: we assert that Christ can and will extract it, if ye plead his promise of “sanctifying you wholly in soul, body, and spirit.” But ye say: “This cannot be; the thorn must stay in till

death extract it; and the leprosy shall cleave to the walls till the house is demolished." Just as if Christ, by radically cleansing the lepers in the days of his flesh, had not given repeated proofs of the absurdity of your argument! Just as if part of the gospel were not: "The lepers are cleansed," and, "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed!"

If ye get nothing in pleading for Christian imperfection, permit me to tell you what you lose by it, and what ye might get by steadily going on to perfection.

1. If ye earnestly aimed at Christian perfection, ye would have a bright testimony in your own souls that you are sincere, and that ye walk agreeably to your baptismal engagements. Some of the most pious Calvinists doubt if those who do not pursue Christian perfection are Christians at all. Hence it follows, that the more earnestly you pursue it, the stronger will be your confidence that you are upright Christians; and when ye shall be perfected in love, ye shall have that evidence of your sincerity which will perfectly "cast out *servile* fear, which hath torment," and nourish the filial fear which has safety and delight. It is hard to conceive how we can constantly enjoy the full assurance of faith, out of the state of Christian perfection. For so long as a Christian inwardly

breaks Christ's law, he is justly condemned in his own conscience. If his heart do not condemn him for it, it is merely because he is asleep in the lap of Antinomianism. On the other hand, says St. John: "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" that make for our condemnation. But if we "love in deed and in truth," which none but the perfect do at all times, "hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." 1 John iii. 19, 20.

2. The perfect Christian, who has left all to follow Christ, is peculiarly near and dear to God. He is, if I may use the expression, one of God's favorites; and his prayers are remarkably answered. This will appear to you indubitable, if ye can receive the testimony of those who are perfected in obedient love. "Behold," say they, "whatsoever we ask, we receive of him; because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight;" that is, because we are perfected in obedient love. 1 John iii. 22. This peculiar blessing ye lose by despising Christian perfection. Nay, so great is the union which subsists between God and the perfect members of his Son, that it is compared to *dwelling in God*, and having God *dwelling in us*, in such a manner that the Father, the Son, and the Comforter are said

to make their abode with us. “At that day [when ye shall be perfected in one] ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him; and we will come to him, and make our abode with him.” John xiv. 20, 23. Again: “He that keepeth God’s commandments dwelleth in God, and God in him.” 1 John iii. 24. “Ye are my [dearest] friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you,” [*i. e.*, if ye attain the perfection of your dispensation.] John xv. 14. Once more: “Keep my commandments; and I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.” John xiv. 15, 16. From these scriptures it appears that, under every dispensation, the perfect, or they who keep the commandments, have unspeakable advantages, from which the lovers of imperfection debar themselves.

3. Ye bring far less glory to God in the state of indwelling sin than ye would do if ye were perfected in love; for perfect Christians (other things being equal) glorify God more than those who remain full of inbred iniquity. Hence it is, that in the very chapter where our Lord so strongly presses Christian perfection upon his disciples, he says: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your

Father who is in heaven." Matt. v. 16. For, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." John xv. 8. It is true that the fruit of the perfect is not always relished by men, who judge only according to appearances; but God, who judges righteous judgment, finds it rich and precious; and, therefore, the two mites which the poor widow gave with a cheerful and perfect heart were more precious in his account, and brought him more glory, than all the money which the imperfect worshippers cast into the treasury, though some of them cast in much. Hence, also, our Lord commanded that the work of perfect love which Mary wrought when she anointed his feet for burial, "should be told for a memorial of her wherever this [the Christian] gospel should be preached in the whole world." Such is the honor which the Lord puts upon the branches in him that bear fruit to perfection.

4. The perfect Christian (other things being equal) is a more useful member of society than the imperfect. Never will ye be such humble men, such good parents, such dutiful children, such loving brothers, such loyal subjects, such kind neighbors, such indulgent husbands, and such faithful friends, as when ye shall have obtained the perfect sincerity of obedience. Ye will then, in your degree, have the simplicity of the gentle

dove, the patience of the laborious ox, the courage of the magnanimous lion, and the wisdom of the wary serpent, without any of its poison. In your little sphere of action ye will abound in "the work of faith, the patience of hope, and the labor of love," far more than ye did before; for a field properly weeded, and cleared from briers, is naturally more fruitful than one which is shaded by spreading brambles, or filled with indwelling roots of noxious weeds: it being a capital mistake to suppose that the plant of humility thrives best when the roots of indwelling sin are twisted round its root.

5. None but "just men made perfect are meet to be made partakers of the inheritance among the saints in light"—an inheritance, this, which no man is fit for till he has "purified himself from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit." If modern divines, therefore, assure you that a believer, full of indwelling sin, has a full title to heaven, believe them not; for the Holy Ghost has said that the believer who "breaks the law of *liberty* in one point, is guilty of all," and that no defilement shall enter into heaven; and our Lord himself has assured us that "the pure in heart shall see God," and that they who are ready for that sight "went in with the bridegroom to the marriage feast of the Lamb." And who is ready? Undoubtedly

the believer whose lamp is trimmed and burning. But is a spiritual lamp trimmed, when its flame is darkened by the black fungus of indwelling sin? Again: Who shall be saved into glory, but the man whose "heart was washed from iniquity?" But is that heart *washed*, which continues full of indwelling corruption? Woe, therefore, be to the heathens, Jews, and Christians, who trifle away "the accepted time," and die without being in a state of heathen, Jewish, or Christian perfection! They have no chance of going to heaven, but through the purgatory preached by the heathens, the Papists, and the imperfectionists. And should the notions of these purgatories be groundless, it unavoidably follows, that unpurged or imperfect souls must, at death, rank with the unready souls whom our Lord calls "foolish virgins," and against whom the door of heaven will be shut. How awful is this consideration, my dear brethren! How should it make us stretch every nerve till we have attained the perfection of our dispensation! I would not encourage tormenting fears in an unscriptural manner; but I should rejoice if all who call Jesus LORD, would mind his solemn declarations: "I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, etc.; but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: fear Him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell;

yea, I say unto you, fear him," who will burn in the fire of wrath those who harbor the indwelling man of sin, lest he should be utterly consumed by the fire of love.

Should ye cry out against this doctrine, and ask if all imperfect Christians are in a *damnable state*, we reply, that so long as a Christian believer sincerely presses after Christian perfection, he is safe ; because he is in the way of duty ; and were he to die at midnight, before midnight God would certainly bring him to Christian perfection, or bring Christian perfection to him ; for we "are confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in them, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, because they work out their salvation with fear and trembling." But if a believer fall, loiter, and rest upon former experiences, depending upon a self-made, Pharisaical perfection, our chief message to him is that of St. Paul : "Awake, thou that sleepest ! Awake to righteousness, and sin not, for thou hast not the *heart-purifying* knowledge of God, which is eternal life. Arise from the dead ;" call for oil ; "and Christ will give thee light." Otherwise thou shalt share the dreadful fate of the lukewarm Laodiceans, and of the foolish virgins, "whose lamps went out," instead of "shining more and more to the perfect day."

6. This is not all: as ye will be fit for judgment, and a glorious heaven, when ye shall be perfected in love, so you will actually enjoy a gracious heaven in your own souls. You will possess "within you the kingdom of God," which consists in settled "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." But so long as ye neglect Christian perfection, and continue sold under indwelling sin, ye not only risk the loss of the heaven of heavens, but ye lose a little heaven upon earth; for perfect Christians are so full of peace and love, that they "triumph in Christ, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and rejoice in tribulation with a patience which has its perfect work." Yea, they "count it all joy when they fall into divers trials;" and such is their deadness to the world, that they "are exceeding glad when men say all manner of evil of them falsely for Christ's sake." How desirable is such a state! And who, but the blessed above, can enjoy a happiness superior to him who can say: "I am ready to be offered up. The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but, O death, where is thy sting?" *Not in my heart*, since "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." *Not in my mind*, "for to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." Now, this

peculiar happiness ye lose, so long as ye continue imperfect Christians.

7. But supposing a Christian who dies in a state of Christian imperfection can escape damnation, and make shift to get to heaven; it is certain that he cannot go into the glorious mansion of perfect Christians, nor shine among the stars of the first magnitude. The wish of my soul is, that, if God's wisdom has so ordered it, imperfect Christians may one day rank among perfect Jews, or perfect heathens. But even upon this supposition, what will they do with their indwelling sin? For a perfect Gentile, and a perfect Jew, are "without guile," according to their light, as well as a perfect Christian. Lean not, then, to the doctrine of the continuance of indwelling sin till death—a doctrine, this, on which a Socrates or a Job would be afraid to mention his heathen perfection, and eternal salvation. On the contrary, by Christian perfection ye may rise to the brightest crowns of righteousness, and "shine like the sun in the kingdom of your Father." O for a noble ambition to obtain one of the first seats in glory! O for a constant, evangelical striving to have the most "abundant entrance ministered unto you into the kingdom of God!" O for a throne among these peculiarly redeemed saints, who "sing the new

song, which none can learn" but themselves. It is not Christ's to give those exalted thrones out of mere distinguishing grace: no, they may be forfeited; for they shall be given to those for whom they are prepared; and they are prepared for them who, evangelically speaking, are *worthy*: "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy," says Christ; and they shall "sit at my right hand, and at my left, in my kingdom," who shall be worthy of that honor: "For them that honor me," says the Lord, "I will honor. Behold I come quickly: my reward is with me, and I will render to every man according to his works." And what reward, think ye, will Christ give you, O my dear, mistaken brethren, if he find you still passing jests upon the doctrine of Christian perfection, which he so strongly recommends? still pleading for the continuance of indwelling sin, which he so greatly abhors?

8. Your whole system of indwelling sin and imputed perfection stands upon two of the most dangerous and false maxims which were ever advanced. The first, which begets Antinomian presumption, runs thus: "Sin cannot destroy us, either in this world or in the world to come." And the second, which is productive of Antinomian despair, is: "Sin cannot be destroyed in this world." O how hard is it for those who worship

where these syren songs pass for sweet songs of Zion, not to be drawn into one of these fatal conclusions! "What need is there of attacking sin with so much eagerness, since, even in the name of the Lord, I cannot destroy it? And why should I resist it with so much watchfulness, since my eternal life and salvation are absolutely secured, and the most poisonous cup of iniquity cannot destroy me, though I should drink of it every day for months or years?" If ye fondly think that ye can neither go backward into a sinful, cursed Egypt, nor yet go forward into a sinless, holy Canaan, how natural will it be for you to say, "Soul, take thine ease," and rest a while in this wilderness on the pillow of self-imputed perfection? O! how many are surprised by the midnight cry, in this Laodicean rest! What numbers meet death with a Solifidian "Lord! Lord!" in their mouths, and with indwelling sin in their hearts! And how inexpressible will be our horror, if we perceive our want of holiness and Christian perfection, only when it will be too late to attain them! To conclude:

9. Indwelling sin is not only "the sting of death," but *the very hell of hells*, if I may use the expression; for a sinless saint in a local hell would dwell in a holy, loving God; and, of consequence, in a spiritual heaven. Like Shadrach,

in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, he might have devouring flames curling about him, but, within him, he would still have the flame of Divine love, and the joy of a good conscience. But so much of *indwelling sin* as we carry about us, so much of *indwelling hell*; so much of the sting which pierces the damned; so much of the spiritual fire which will burn up the wicked; so much of the never-dying worm which will prey upon them; so much of the dreadful instrument which will rack them; so much of Satan's image which will frighten them; so much of the characteristic by which the devil's children shall be distinguished from the children of God; so much of the black mark whereby the goats shall be separated from the sheep. To plead, therefore, for the continuance of indwelling sin, is no better than to plead for keeping in your hearts one of the sharpest stings of death, and one of the hottest coals in hell-fire. On the other hand, to attain Christian perfection is to have the last feature of Belial's image erased from your loving souls, the last bit of the sting of death extracted from your composed breasts, and the last spark of hell-fire extinguished in your peaceful bosoms. It is to enter into the spiritual rest which remains on earth for the people of God—a delightful rest, this, where your soul will enjoy a calm in the midst of outward

storm; and where your spirit will no longer be tossed by the billows of swelling pride, dissatisfied avarice, pining envy, disappointed hopes, fruitless cares, dubious anxiety, turbulent anger, fretting impatience, and racking unbelief. It is to enjoy that even state of mind in which all things will work together for your good. There your love will bear its excellent fruits during the sharpest winter of affliction, as well as in the finest summer of prosperity. There you will be more and more settled in peaceful humility. There you will continually grow in a holy familiarity with the Friend of penitent sinners, and your prospect of eternal felicity will brighten every day.*

Innumerable are the advantages which established, perfect Christians have over carnal, unsettled believers, who continue sold under indwelling sin. And will ye despise those blessings to your dying-day, O ye prejudiced imperfectionists? Will ye secure to yourselves the contrary curses?

* If the arguments and expostulations contained in these sheets be rational and scriptural, is not Mr. Wesley in the right when he says that "all preachers should make a point of preaching perfection to believers, constantly, strongly, and explicitly;" and that "all believers should mind this one thing, and continually agonize for it?" And do not all the ministers who preach against Christian perfection, preach against the perfection of Christianity, oppose holiness, resist the sanctifying truth as it is in Jesus, recommend an unscriptural purgatory, plead for sin, instead of striving against it, and delude imperfect Christians into Laodicean ease?

Nay, will ye entail them upon the generations which are yet unborn, by continuing to print, preach, or argue for the continuance of indwelling sin, the capital woe belonging to the devil and his angels? God forbid! We hope better things from you; not doubting but the error of several of you lies chiefly in your judgment, and springs from a misunderstanding of the question, rather than from a malicious opposition to that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." With pleasure we remember and follow St. Jude's loving direction: "Of some [the simple-hearted, who are seduced into Antinomianism] have compassion, making a difference; and others [the bigots and obstinate seducers, who wilfully shut their eyes against the truth] save with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh;" although they will not be ashamed to plead for the continuance of a defiling fountain of carnality in the very hearts of all God's people. We are fully persuaded, my dear brethren, that we should wrong you if we did not acknowledge that many of you have a sincere desire to be saved by Christ into all purity of heart and life; and with regard to such imperfectionists, our chief complaint is, that their desire is "not according to knowledge."

If others of you, of a different stamp, should laugh at these pages, and (still producing banter

instead of argument) should continue to say: "Where are your perfect Christians? Show us but one, and we will believe your doctrine of perfection;" I shall just put them in mind of St. Peter's awful prophecy: "Know this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own [indwelling] lusts, and saying, *Where is the promise of his spiritual coming* [to make an end of sin, thoroughly to purge his floor, and to burn the chaff with unquenchable fire?] *For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning:*" all believers are still carnal and sold under sin, as well as father Paul. And if such mockers continue to display their prejudice by such taunts, I shall take the liberty to show them their own picture, by pointing at those prejudiced professors of old, who said, concerning the most perfect of all the perfect: "What sign showest thou, that we may receive thy doctrine? Come down from the cross, and we will believe." O the folly and danger of such scoffs! "Blessed is he that sitteth not in the seat of the scornful," and maketh much of them "that fear the Lord." Yea, he is blessed next to them "that are undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord, keep his testimonies, and seek him with their whole heart." Ps. cxix. 1, 2.

Should ye ask : "To what purpose do you make all this ado about Christian perfection ? Do those who maintain this doctrine live more holy and useful lives than other believers ?" I answer :

1. Every thing being equal, they undoubtedly do, if they hold not the truth in unrighteousness ; for the best principles, when they are cordially embraced, will always produce the best practices. But, alas ! too many merely contend for Christian perfection in a speculative, systematical manner. They recommend it to others with their lips, as a point of doctrine which makes a part of their religious system ; instead of following after it with their hearts, as a blessing which they must attain, if they will not be found as unprepared for judgment as the foolish virgins. These perfectionists are, so far, hypocrites ; nor should their fatal inconsistency make us to despise the truth which they contend for, any more than the conduct of thousands, who contend for the truth of the Scriptures, while they live in full opposition to the Scriptures, ought to make us despise the Bible.

2. On the other hand, some gracious persons speak against Christian perfection with their lips, but cannot help following hard after it with their hearts ; and while they do so, they sometimes attain the thing, although they continue to quarrel with the name. These perfect imperfectionists

undoubtedly adorn the gospel of Christ far more than the imperfect, hypocritical perfectionists whom I have just described ; and God, who looks at the simplicity of the heart more than at the consistency of the judgment, pities their mistakes, and accepts their works.

But, 3. Some there are who both maintain doctrinally and practically the necessity of a perfect devotedness of themselves to God. They hold the truth, and they hold it in wisdom and righteousness ; their tempers and conduct enforce it, as well as their words and profession. And on this account they have a great advantage over the two preceding classes of professors. Reason and revelation jointly crown the orthodoxy and faithfulness of these *perfect perfectionists*, who neither strengthen the hands of the wicked, nor excite the wonder of the judicious, by absurdly pleading for indwelling sin with their lips, while they strive to work righteousness with their hands and hearts. If ye candidly weigh this threefold distinction, I doubt not but ye will blame the irrational inconsistency of holy imperfectionists, condemn the moral inconsistency of unholy perfectionists, and agree with me that the most excellent Christian is a consistent, holy perfectionist.

And now, my dear, mistaken brethren, take in good part these plain solutions, expostulations,

and reproofs; and give glory to God, by believing that he can and will yet save you to the uttermost from your evil tempers, if ye humbly come to him by Christ. Day and night ask of him the new heart, which “keeps the commandments;” and when ye shall have received it, if you keep it with all diligence, sin shall no more pollute it, than it polluted our Lord’s soul, when he said: “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” Burn, in the meantime, the unhallowed pens, and bridle the rash tongues, with which ye have pleaded for the continuance of sin till death. Honor us with the right hand of fellowship; and, like reconciled brethren, let us, at every opportunity, lovingly fall upon our knees together, to implore the help of Him who “can do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” Nor let us give him any rest, till he has perfected all our souls in “the charity which rejoiceth in the truth” without prejudice, in the obedience which keeps the commandments without reserve, and in the perseverance which finds that “in keeping of them there is great reward.”

Nothing but such a conduct as this can remove the stumbling-blocks which the conten-

tions ye breed have laid in the way of a Deistical world. When the men whom your mistakes have hardened shall see that you listen to Scripture and reason, who knows but their prejudices may subside, and some of them may yet say: "See the good which arises from friendly controversy! See how these Christians desire to be perfected in one! They now understand one another. Babylonish confusion is at an end; evangelical truth prevails; and love, the most delicious fruit of truth, visibly grows to Christian perfection." God grant that, through the concurrence of your candor, this may soon be the language of all those whom the bigotry of professors has confirmed in their prejudices against Christianity!

Should this plain address so far influence you, my dear brethren, as to abate the force of your aversion to the doctrine of pure love, or to stagger your unaccountable faith in a death-purgatory; and should you seriously ask which is the way to Christian perfection, I entreat you to pass on to the next section, where, I hope, you will find a scriptural answer to some important questions, which, I trust, a few of you are by this time ready to propose.

CHAPTER XVI.

ADDRESS TO THOSE WHO DESIRE CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

HAVING felt the pardoning efficacy of the atoning blood of Christ, as you now desire, dear brethren, to “go on to perfection”—to experience the fulness of its power in the complete redemption of your souls from all sin, from its pollution as well as its power—ye will gladly receive any instruction, however humble the source, that may help you to this most desirable attainment. Ye see the absolute necessity of personally “fulfilling the law of Christ;” your bosom glows with desire to “perfect holiness in the fear of God;” and, far from blushing to be called perfectionists, ye openly assert that *perfect faith*, productive of *perfect love* to God and man, is the pearl of great price, for which ye are determined to sell all, and which, through Christ, ye will seek early and late, as the one thing needful for your spiritual and eternal welfare.

I. In the first place, then, get tolerably clear ideas of this perfection. This is absolutely necessary. If you would hit a mark, you must know where it is. Some people aim at Christian perfection; but, mistaking for it angelical perfection, they shoot above the mark, miss it, and then peevishly give up their hopes. Others place the mark as much too low: hence it is that you hear them profess to have attained Christian perfection, when they have not so much as attained the mental serenity of a philosopher, or the candor of a good-natured, conscientious heathen. In the preceding pages, if I am not mistaken, the mark is fixed according to the rules of scriptural moderation. It is not placed so high as to make you despair of hitting it, if you do your best in an evangelical manner, nor yet so low as to allow you to presume to reach it without exerting all your ability to the uttermost, in due subordination to the efficacy of Jesus's blood, and the Spirit's sanctifying influences.

II. [We must believe that this doctrine is taught in the word of God. If we have any settled doubt on this point, our search will prove vain, for "he that doubteth is condemned" to disappointment, without any reasonable hope of success until his doubts are removed. Without full, satisfactory conviction on this point, there is no

going one step farther. We must also be satisfied of its attainability in this life by all truly earnest, persevering seekers. And if any one has ever attained it, why may not I? for "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God is accepted of him." These things have been fully discussed, and, we trust, settled to your satisfaction, in the former parts of this work.

III. As steam is to the engine, so is desire to the mind. It is the propelling power. Without it all effort would be enervated, and all enterprises would stagnate. But a considerable quantity of steam is necessary to move the engine at all, and still more to move the boat; yet it will be of no use unless sufficiently high to propel the boat against wind and current. So, a weak desire will avail nothing. There may be, and doubtless is, desire latent in the bosom of every Christian to be wholly a Christian; yet it must be strong and earnest enough to engage one's powers sufficiently to commence heartily the work of self-purification—to call forth to vigorous exercise every energy in the arduous and unceasing labors and self-denials of a life of entire holiness. Desire, strong, controlling, overwhelming desire is essential to prepare us for the all-important work, and urge us on to take the subsequent steps in its attainment. ✓

And is not holiness of heart infinitely more desirable than all earthly good? What honor is equal to the honor of being a perfectly holy child of God? What wealth can weigh against the all-abounding riches of grace in Christ Jesus? What pleasure can compare with the love, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost, which are the hourly companions of the holy heart? What hopes like those which become brilliantly visible and sensibly present by the aid of the constantly-adjusted telescope of faith? O, why do not our hearts constantly burn with intense desire for full conformity to the will and image of our Heavenly Father?]

IV. Set out for the Canaan of perfect love with a firm resolution to labor for the rest that remains on earth for the people of God. You will never steadily go on to perfection till you do. Let others laugh at you for making humble resolutions, but go on "steadfastly purposing to lead a new life," and, in order to this, steadfastly purpose to get a *new heart*, in the full sense of the word; for so long as your heart remains *unrenewed*, it will be partly *unholy*. And therefore St. James justly observes that "if any offend not in word, he is a perfect man:" he loves God with all his heart; his heart is fully renewed; it being impossible that a heart still tainted in part with vanity and guile should always dictate words of sincerity and love. Your

good resolutions need not fail; nor will they fail, if, under a due sense of the fickleness and helplessness of your unassisted free-will, you properly depend upon God's faithfulness and assistance. However, should they fail, as they probably will do more than once, be not discouraged, but repent, search out the cause, and, in the strength of free grace, let your assisted free-will renew your evangelical purpose till the Lord seals it with his mighty fiat, and says: "Let it be done to thee according to thy resolving faith." It is better to be laughed at as "poor creatures who know nothing of themselves," than to be deluded as foolish virgins who fondly imagine that their vessels are full of imputed oil. Conscious of your impotence, yet in the strength of Divine grace, resolve, "I will arise and go to my Father;" and say, with David, "I *will* love thee, O Lord my God; I will behold thy face in righteousness; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress; I will keep it, as it were, with a bridle; I have said that I would keep thy word: the proud—and they that are humble in an unscriptural way—have had me exceedingly in derision, but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." Say, with St. Paul, "I am determined not to know any thing save Jesus and him cruci-

fied ;” and with Jacob: “I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me.” And, to sum up all good resolutions in one, say: “I have engaged to renounce all the vanities of this wicked world, all the sinful lusts of the flesh, and all the works of the devil ; to believe all the articles of the Christian faith ; and to keep God’s commandments all the days of my life ;” that is, I have most solemnly resolved to be a perfect Christian.

“Much diligence,” says Kempis, “is necessary to him that will profit much. If he who firmly purposeth much, often faileth, what shall he do who seldom or feebly purposeth any thing?” But I say it again and again, do not lean upon your free-will and good purposes so as to encroach upon the glorious preëminence of free grace. Lay your principal stress upon Divine mercy, and say with the good man whom I have just quoted: “Help me, O Lord God, in thy holy service, and grant that I may now, this day, begin perfectly.”

[What is fully intended, is half accomplished. When you have thoroughly determined to be a perfect Christian, to follow implicitly the leadings of the Spirit in all things, you have proceeded far on the way to Christian perfection. On the other hand, we accomplish no work of importance and difficulty without first intending to do it.

V. The next step in this work is repentance : not the repentance of the guilty, unregenerate sinner ; for the guilt of the person whom we address is supposed to be cancelled—his pardon for all past offences sealed by the Holy Spirit. But it consists in deep contrition of soul, induced by the felt consciousness that his nature is not yet completely under the control of the Divine life within. It is intense grief that he is not in all things under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ ; painful regret that every passion and proclivity is not wholly conformable to the will of his Heavenly Father.

“The repentance consequent upon justification,” says the Rev. J. Wesley, in his sermon on the “Scripture Way of Salvation,” “is widely different from that which is antecedent to it. This implies no guilt, no sense of condemnation, no consciousness of the wrath of God. It does not suppose any doubt of the favor of God, or any ‘fear that hath torment.’ It is properly a conviction, wrought by the Holy Ghost, of the *sin* which still *remains* in our heart—of the *φρόνημα σαρκός*, the *carnal mind*, which ‘does still *remain* even in them that are regenerate,’ although it does no longer *reign*—it has not now dominion over them. It is a conviction of our proneness to evil, of a heart bent to backsliding, of the still continuing tendency of the

flesh to lust against the Spirit. Sometimes, unless we continually watch and pray, it lusteth to pride, sometimes to anger, sometimes to love of the world, love of ease, love of honor, or love of pleasure, more than of God. It is a conviction of the tendency of our heart to self-will, to atheism, or idolatry, and, above all, to unbelief, whereby, in a thousand ways and under a thousand pretences, we are ever departing more or less from the living God.

“With this conviction of sin remaining in our *hearts*, there is joined a clear conviction of the sin remaining in our lives, still cleaving to all our words and actions. In the best of these we now discern a mixture of evil, either in the spirit, the matter, or the manner of them; something that could not endure the righteous judgment of God, were he extreme to mark what is done amiss. Where we least suspected it, we find a taint of pride or self-will, of unbelief or idolatry; so that we are now more ashamed of our best duties than formerly of our worst sins; and hence we cannot but feel that these are, so far from having any thing meritorious in them—yea, so far from being able to stand in sight of the Divine justice—that for those also we should be guilty before God, were it not for the blood of the covenant.

“Experience shows that, together with the con-

viction of sin *remaining* in our *hearts*, and cleaving to our words and actions—as well as the guilt which, on account thereof, we should incur, were we not continually sprinkled with the atoning blood—one thing more is implied in this repentance, viz.: a conviction of our helplessness, of our utter inability to think one good thought, or to form one good desire; and, much more, to speak one word aright, or to perform one good action, but through his free, almighty grace, first preventing us, and then accompanying us every moment.”]

To promote this deep repentance, consider how many spiritual evils still haunt your breast. Look into the inward “chamber of imagery,” where assuming self-love, surrounded by a multitude of vain thoughts, foolish desires, and wild imaginations, keeps her court. Grieve that your heart, which should be all flesh, is partly stone, and that your soul, which should be only a temple for the Holy Ghost, is yet so frequently turned into a den of thieves, a hole for the cockatrice, a nest for a brood of spiritual vipers—for the remains of envy, jealousy, fretfulness, anger, pride, impatience, peevishness, formality, sloth, prejudice, bigotry, carnal confidence, evil shame, self-righteousness, tormenting fears, uncharitable suspicions, idolatrous love, and I know not how many of the evils

which form the retinue of hypocrisy and unbelief. Through grace detect these evils by a close attention to what passes in your own heart at all times, especially in an hour of temptation. By frequent and deep confessions, drag out all these abominations, these sins which would not have Christ to reign alone over you : bring them before him ; place them in the light of his countenance ; and, if you do it in faith, that light and the warmth of his love will kill them, as the light and heat of the sun kill the worms which the plough turns up to the open air in a dry summer's day. Lament, as you are able, the darkness of your mind, the stubbornness of your will, the dulness or exorbitancy of your affections, and importunately entreat the God of all grace to "renew a right spirit within you." If ye sorrow after a godly sort, "what carefulness will be wrought in you ! what indignation ! what fear ! what vehement desire ! what zeal ! yea, what revenge !" You will then sing in faith :

"O how I hate those lusts of mine,
That crucified my God ;
Those sins that pierced and nailed his flesh
Fast to the fatal wood !

"Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die,
My heart hath so decreed ;
Nor will I spare those guilty things
That made my Saviour bleed.

“While, with a melting, broken heart,
My murdered Lord I view,
I’ll raise revenge against my sins,
And slay the murderers too.”

[The author just quoted, in his sermon on “Repentance of Believers”—to all of which the attention of the reader is earnestly referred—says further: “It is the consciousness of this—that we still retain a depth of sin—which constrains us to groan for a full deliverance to Him that is mighty to save. Hence it is that those believers who are not convinced of the deep corruption of their hearts, or but slightly and, as it were, notionally convinced, have little concern about *entire sanctification*. They may possibly hold the opinion that such a thing is to be, either at death, or some time, they know not when, before it. But they have no great uneasiness for the want of it, and no great hunger or thirst after it. They cannot, until they know themselves better, until they repent in the sense above described, until God unveils the inbred monster’s face, and shows them the real state of their souls. Then only, when they feel the burden, will they groan for deliverance from it. Then, and not till then, will they cry out in the agony of their souls:

“Break off the yoke of inbred sin,
And fully set my spirit free!
I cannot rest till pure within,
Till I am wholly lost in thee!”

VI. Before our God can be expected to manifest himself as our Redeemer from all sin, as our all in all, we must give ourselves wholly to him. We must make an unconditional, unreserved, and eternal consecration of ourselves, with all our possessions, our friendships, our families, our hopes, our all, to Him "whose offspring we are, in whom we live and move and have our being;" fully realizing that "we are not our own, but that we are bought with a price."

1. This must be an *unconditional* giving up of ourselves. Some may imagine that they are "doing God service" when they feel willing to present themselves wholly to him, *if* he will accept and sanctify them; or that *so long as* he will accept, they will continue the offering. Such is no sacrifice at all, but merely a proposal to bargain with him, which he, of course, cannot accept. If we have not confidence enough in him to make an unconditional surrender at discretion, it is vain to attempt the exercise of that higher faith to which you will yet be called before accomplishing this great work.

2. Every power of our being must we devote to him. A holocaust, or nothing. You must keep back nothing, lest you be found to "lie unto the Holy Ghost." We must fully fix our affections on him as the true source of our happiness, looking

for joy in nothing which he does not heartily approve, loving only him and what he desires we should love. Our intellect we must engage in planning and in carrying out plans for promoting in some way the interests of his kingdom, in studying his will and in fulfilling it—our senses in conveying to the mind such impressions as may enable us to honor him—and, also, our physical faculties in doing what is consonant with his will—in short, in “glorifying God in our bodies and spirits,” which we freely, and in the fullest sense, acknowledge to be his. In all worldly goods acting as his stewards, expending them only as we may be convinced will accord with his will; considering ourselves the voluntary slaves of the Lord—our rightful, absolute Master—and to be entirely subservient to his will.

3. It must not only be a total, unreserved consecration, but an eternal self-immolation upon the altar of Divine service. As there must be no reserve, so must there be no withdrawal of the offering. *For life and for eternity*, should be your motto. If, when you make the offering, you indulge the thought of ever withdrawing it, you have the surest proof that it is not acceptable. For this were a mock offering—a mere service of the lips. And we should remember that, however

much we may deceive others, and even ourselves, "God is not mocked."

When thus wholly consecrated to God, you will not shrink from bearing the cross, though you find it so heavy as to faint beneath the load; nor even then will you throw it off, but wait on God until he gives you new accessions of strength from on high. You will find, however opposed by the clamorings of self-indulgence, no duty too unpleasant to be undertaken, or too arduous to be accomplished, "through Christ who strengtheneth you."]

Another consequence of this self-devotion is the practice of a judicious, universal self-denial. "If thou wilt be perfect," says our Lord, "deny thyself, take up thy cross daily, and follow me." "He that loveth father or mother—much more, he that loveth praise, pleasure, or money—more than me, is not worthy of me." Nay, "whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose it for my sake shall find it." Many desire to live and reign with Christ, but few choose to suffer and die with him. However, as the way of the cross leads to heaven, it undoubtedly leads to Christian perfection. To avoid the cross, therefore, or to decline drinking the vinegar and gall which God permits your friends or foes to mingle for

you, is to refuse a medicine which is kindly prepared to restore your health and appetite; in a word, it is to renounce the Physician who "heals all our infirmities" when we take his bitter draughts, submit to have our imposthumes opened by his sharp lancet, and yield to have our proud flesh wasted away by his painful caustics.

[A third result of this self-devotion is a willing submission to the whole will of God; not only to be active in performing all the requirements of his law, but also to be meekly resigned under all the temptations and sufferings which we may have to undergo.] Our Lord "was made a *perfect Saviour* through sufferings," and we may be made perfect Christians in the same manner. We may be called to suffer till all that which we have brought out of spiritual Egypt is consumed in a howling wilderness, in a dismal Gethsemane, or on a shameful Calvary. Should this lot be reserved for us, let us not imitate our Lord's imperfect disciples, who "forsook him and fled," but let us stand the fiery trial till all our fetters are melted and our dross is purged away. Fire is of a purgative nature—it separates the dross from the gold; and the fiercer it is, the more quick and powerful is its operation. "He that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the

daughters of Zion, and shall have purged away the blood of Jerusalem by the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning." Isaiah iv. 3, 4. "I will bring the third part through the fire, saith the Lord, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Zech. xiii. 9. Therefore, if the Lord shall suffer the best men in the camp, or the strongest men in Satan's army, to cast you into a furnace of fiery temptations, come not out of it till you are called. "Let patience have its perfect work:" meekly keep your trying station, till your heart is disengaged from all that is earthly, and till the sense of God's preserving power kindles in you such a faith in his omnipotent love as few experimentally know, but they who have seen themselves, like the mysterious bush in Horeb, burning and yet unconsumed; or they who can say with St. Paul: "We are killed all the day long—dying, and behold we live!"

"Temptations," says Kempis, "are often very profitable to men, though they be troublesome and grievous; for in them a man is humbled, purified, and instructed. All the saints have passed through and profited by many tribulations; and they that could not bear temptations, became reprobates, and

fell away." "My son," adds the author of Ecclesiasticus—chap. ii. 1—"if thou come to serve the Lord" in the perfect beauty of holiness, "prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright; constantly endure, and make not haste in the time of trouble. Whatever is brought upon thee, take cheerfully; and be patient when thou art changed to a low estate; for gold is tried and purified in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity." And therefore says St. James: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried—if he stands the trial—he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him" with the love which endureth all things, that is, with perfect love. James i. 12. Patiently endure, then, when God "for a season—if need be—suffers you to be in heaviness through manifold temptations." By this means, "the trial of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried in the fire, will be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter i. 7.

VII. Deep repentance is good, gospel self-denial is excellent, and patient resignation in trials is of unspeakable use to attain the perfection of love; but as "faith *immediately* works by love," it is of far more immediate use to purify the soul.

Hence it is that Christ, the prophets, and the apostles, so strongly insist upon faith; assuring us that "if we will not believe we shall not be established;" that "if we will believe, we shall see the glory of God; we shall be saved, and rivers of living water shall flow from our inmost souls; that our hearts are purified by faith, and that we are saved by grace through faith." They tell us that Christ "gave himself for the Church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it—by the word;—that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Now, if believers are to be "cleansed and made without blemish" by the word—which testifies of the all-atoning blood and the love of the Spirit—it is evident that they are to be sanctified by faith; for faith, or believing, has as necessary a reference to the word, as eating has to food. For the same reason, the apostle observes that they "who believe do enter into rest;" that, "a promise being given us to enter in, we should take care not to fall short of it through unbelief;" that we ought to take warning by the Israelites, who "could not enter" into the land of promise, "through unbelief;" that that we are "filled with all joy and peace in believing;" and that "Christ is able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God through him."

Now, coming, in Scripture language, is another expression for *believing*: "He that cometh to God must believe," says the apostle. Hence it appears that faith is peculiarly necessary to those who will be "saved to the uttermost," especially a firm faith in the capital promise of the gospel of Christ, the promise of the "Spirit of holiness," from the Father, through the Son. For "how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Or how can they earnestly plead the truth and steadily wait for the performance of a promise in which they have no faith? This doctrine of faith is supported by the words of St. Peter: "God, who knoweth the hearts—of penitent believers—bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, purifying their hearts by faith." Acts xv. 8, 9. For the same Spirit of faith, which initially purifies our hearts when we cordially believe the pardoning love of God, *completely* cleanses them when we fully believe his sanctifying love.

["Faith," as defined by the apostle, "is a full persuasion of things hoped for, a clear demonstration of things invisible." The faith by which we are sanctified does not differ essentially from the faith by which we are justified. In each case it has Christ for its object; in each, it is an acknowledgment of our own sinfulness, helplessness, dependence, and necessity; and that we have no

other possible source of deliverance than Christ. The difference is in the object for which we look to him. In one case, we look to his blood as a sufficient atonement for the pardon of all our transgressions; in the other, we look to the same blood as spilt to wash away all our uncleanness—as completely capable of thoroughly renovating our moral nature, so as wholly to conform it to the will of God. He that has an intellectual comprehension of the one can easily understand the other; and as those whom we address have an experimental acquaintance with justifying faith, we would refer them to their former experience, and ask them to accept Christ in the same way as their Redeemer from the pollution of sin as formerly, and, at present, from its guilt.

Faith, in reference to sanctification, is, 1. A conviction, as clear as demonstration can make it, that it is promised in God's word. "Till thoroughly satisfied of this, there is no moving one step farther. And one would imagine that there needed not one word more to satisfy a reasonable man of this than the ancient promise, 'Then will I circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.' How clearly does this express the being perfected in love! how strongly imply the being saved from all sin! For as long as love

takes up the whole heart, what room is there for sin therein?" 2. It is such a conviction that God—with whom nothing is impossible—is able and willing to confer it on me. 3. It is such a conviction and persuasion that he is able and willing and ready to sanctify me *now*. And why not now? Does he not say, "*Now* is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation?" And can any thing be gained by delay? Can God become more willing? Or can procrastination, which is, at the same time, the offspring and promoter of rebellion, better the heart or render it worthy of the favor of God? When God says "*now*," by what right do you postpone, and cry out for a "*convenient season*" in the future? 4. To this must be added a full persuasion, an unwavering conviction of his readiness and ability to save me now *just as I am*; to sanctify my nature as corrupt, as alienated from him as it is, without waiting to make myself any better, or any more fit for the exercise of his purifying energy. You will have to come to this point before you can possibly attain the end. And why put it off? Did not Christ come to save those who feel themselves sinners? And if you could fit yourselves for God's favor, what need would you have for Christ? When you come, thus casting your whole soul, your entire destiny, upon the Lamb of God, in unreserved reliance

on him, in that moment will he seal your soul's entire renovation, then will his Spirit testify to yours that Christ is indeed your Redeemer from all sin, your All in all.]

VIII. Social prayer is closely connected with faith in the capital promise of the sanctifying Spirit; and therefore I earnestly recommend that means of grace, where it can be had, as being eminently conducive to the attaining of Christian perfection. When many believing hearts are lifted up, and wrestle with God in prayer together, you may compare them to many diligent hands which work a large machine. At such times, particularly, the fountains of the great deep are broken up, the windows of heaven are opened, and "rivers of living water flow" into the hearts of obedient believers.

"In Christ when brethren join,
And follow after peace,
The fellowship divine
He promises to bless,
His chiefest graces to bestow
Where two or three are met below.

"Where unity takes place,
The joys of heaven we prove;
This is the gospel grace,
The unction from above,
The Spirit on all believers shed,
Descending swift from Christ their Head."

Accordingly we read, that when God powerfully

opened the kingdom of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, the disciples "were all with one accord in one place." And when he confirmed that kingdom, they "were lifting up their voices to God with one accord." See Acts ii. 1, and iv. 24. Thus, also, the believers at Samaria were filled with the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, while Peter and John prayed with them, and laid their hands upon them.

IX. But perhaps thou art alone. As a solitary bird which sitteth on the house-top, thou lookest for a companion who may go with thee through the deepest travail of the regeneration. But, alas! thou lookest in vain; all the professors about thee seem satisfied with their former experiences, and with self-imputed or self-conceited perfection. When thou givest them a hint of thy want of power from on high, and of thy hunger and thirst after a fulness of righteousness, they do not sympathize with thee. And, indeed, how can they? They are full already, they reign without thee, they have need of nothing. They do not sensibly want that "God would grant them, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith, that they, being rooted and grounded in love, may comprehend with all saints [perfected in love] what is the breadth and length

and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God." Eph. iii. 16, etc. They look upon thee as a whimsical person, full of singular notions, and they rather damp than enliven thy hopes. Thy circumstances are sad ; but do not give place to despair, no, not for a moment. In the name of Christ, who could not get even Peter, James, and John to watch with him one hour ; and who was obliged to go through his agony alone ; in his name, I say, "Cast not away thy confidence, which has great recompense of reward." Under all thy discouragements, remember that, after all, Divine grace is not confined to numbers, any more than to a few. When all outward helps fail thee, make the more of Christ, on whom sufficient help is laid for thee—Christ, who says : "I will go with thee through fire and water ;" the former shall not burn thee, nor the latter drown thee. Jacob was alone when he wrestled with the angel, yet he prevailed ; and if the servant is not above his master, wonder not that it should be said of thee, as of thy Lord, when he went through his greatest temptations, "Of the people, there was none with him."

Should thy conflicts be "with confused noise, with burning and fuel of fire ;" should thy "Jerusalem be rebuilt in troublesome times ;" should the

Lord “shake, not the earth only, but also heaven; should deep call unto deep at the noise of his water-spouts; should all his waves and billows go over thee;” should thy patience be tried to the uttermost; remember how, in years past, thou hast tried the patience of God, nor be discouraged: an extremity and a storm are often God’s opportunity. A blast of temptation, and a shaking of all thy foundations, may introduce the fulness of God to thy soul, and answer the end of the rushing wind, and of the shaking, which formerly accompanied the first great manifestations of the Spirit. The Jews still expect the coming of the Messiah in the flesh, and they particularly expect it in a storm. When lightnings flash, when thunders roar, when a strong wind shakes their houses, and the tempestuous sky seems to rush down in thunder showers, then some of them particularly open their doors and windows to entertain their wished-for Deliverer. Do spiritually what they do carnally. Constantly wait for full “power from on high;” but especially when a storm of affliction, temptation, or distress overtakes thee; or when thy convictions and desires raise thee above thyself, as the waters of the flood raised Noah’s ark above the earth; then be particularly careful to throw the door of FAITH and the window of HOPE as wide open as thou canst; and, spreading the

arms of thy imperfect LOVE, say, with all the ardor and resignation which thou art master of:

“My heart-strings groan with deep complaint,
My flesh lies panting, Lord, for thee;
And every limb and every joint
Stretches for perfect purity.”

But if the Lord be pleased to come softly to thy help; if he make an end of thy corruption by helping thee gently to sink to unknown depths of meekness; if he drown the indwelling man of sin, by baptizing, by plunging him into an abyss of humility; do not find fault with the simplicity of his method, the plainness of his appearing, and the commonness of his prescription. Nature, like Naaman, is full of prejudices. She expects that Christ will come to make her clean with as much ado, pomp, and bustle, as the Syrian general looked for “when he was wroth and said, Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me—and stand—and call on his God—and strike his hand over the place—and recover the leper.” Christ frequently goes a much plainer way to work; and by this means he disconcerts all our preconceived notions and schemes of deliverance. “Learn of me to be meek and lowly in heart, and thou shalt find rest to thy soul,” the sweet rest of Christian perfection, of perfect humility, resignation, and meekness. Lie at my feet, as she did who loved much,

and was meekly taken up with "the good part, and the one thing needful." But thou fittest; thou despisest this robe of perfection; it is too plain for thee; thou slightest "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price;" nothing will serve thy turn but a tawdry coat of many colors, which may please thy proud self-will, and draw the attention of others by its glorious and flaming appearance; and it must be brought to thee with lightnings, thunderings, and voices. If this be thy disposition, wonder not at the Divine wisdom which thinks fit to disappoint thy lofty prejudices; and let me address thee as Naaman's servants addressed him: "My brother, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he says to thee, *I am the meek and lowly Lamb of God; wash in the stream of my blood—plunge in the Jordan of my humility, and be clean!*" Instead, therefore, of going away from a plain Jesus in a rage, welcome him in his lowest appearance, and be persuaded that he can as easily make an end of thy sin, by gently coming in "a still, small voice," as by rushing in upon thee in "a storm, a fire, or an earthquake." The Jews rejected their Saviour, not so much because they did not earnestly desire his coming, as because he did not come in the manner

in which they expected him. It is probable that some of this Judaism cleaves to thee. If thou wilt absolutely come to Mount Zion in a triumphal chariot, or make thine entrance into the New Jerusalem upon a prancing horse, thou art likely never to come there. Leave, then, all thy lordly misconceptions behind; and humbly follow thy King, who makes his entry into the typical Jerusalem, "meek and lowly, riding upon an ass, yea, upon a colt, the foal of an ass." I say it again, therefore, while thy faith and hope strongly insist on the blessing, let thy resignation and patience leave to God's infinite goodness and wisdom the peculiar manner of bestowing it. When he says, "Surely I come quickly to make my abode with thee," let thy faith close in with his word; ardently and yet meekly embrace his promise. This will instantly beget power; and with that power thou mayest instantly bring forth prayer, and possibly the prayer which opens heaven, which humbly wrestles with God, inherits the blessing, and turns the well-known petition, "Amen! Even so, come Lord Jesus," into the well-known praises, *He is come, he is come, O praise the Lord, O my soul*, etc. Thus repent, believe and obey; and "he that cometh will come" with a fulness of pure, meek, humble love; "he will not tarry, or if he tarry, it will be to give thy faith and desires more time to

open, that thou mayest, at his appearing, be able to take in more of his perfecting grace and sanctifying power : beside, thy expectation of his coming is of a purifying nature, and gradually sanctifies thee. "He that has this hope in him," by this very hope "purifies himself even as God is pure;" for "we are saved [into perfect love] by hope as well as by faith." The stalk, as well as the root, bears "the full corn in the ear."

Up, then, thou sincere expectant of God's kingdom ! Let thy humble, ardent free-will meet convenient, sanctifying free grace in its weakest and darkest appearance, as the father of the faithful met the Lord, "when he appeared to him on the plain of Mamre" as a mere mortal. "Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and lo ! three men stood by him." So does free grace (if I may venture upon the allusion) invite itself to thy tent : nay, it is now with thee in its creating, redeeming, and sanctifying influences. "And when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground." Go and do likewise : if thou seest any beauty in the humbling grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sanctifying love of God, and in the comfortable fellowship of the Holy Ghost, let thy free-will run to meet them, and bow itself toward the ground. O for a speedy going out of thy tent, thy sinful self ! O for a

race of desire in the way of faith! O for incessant prostrations! O for a meek and deep bowing of thyself before thy Divine Deliverer! "And Abraham said, *My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant!*" O for the humble pressing of a loving faith! O for the faith which stopped the sun, when God avenged his people in the days of Joshua! O for the importunate faith of the two disciples who detained Christ, when "he made as though he would have gone farther! They constrained him, saying, *Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.* And he went in to tarry with them." He soon, indeed, vanished out of their bodily sight, because they were not called always to enjoy his bodily presence. Far from promising them that blessing, he had said: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you, that he may abide with you for ever. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." This promise is "YEA and AMEN in Christ;" only plead it according to the preceding directions, and as sure as the Lord is the true and faithful Witness, so sure will the God of hope and love soon fill you with all joy and peace, that ye may abound in pure love, as well as in confirmed hope, "through the power

of the Holy Ghost." Then shall you have an indisputable right to join the believers who sing :

"MANY are we now and ONE,
We who Jesus have put on :
There is neither bond nor free,
Male nor female, Lord, in thee.
Love, like death, hath all destroyed,
Rendered all distinction void ;
Names, and sects, and parties fall :
Thou, O Christ, art all in all."

In the meantime you may sing :

"O for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free !
A heart that always feels thy blood
So freely spilt for me !—

"A heart resigned, submissive, meek,
My great Redeemer's throne,—
Where only Christ is heard to speak,
Where Jesus reigns alone.

"O for a lowly, contrite heart,
Believing, true, and clean !
Which neither life nor death can part
From Him that dwells within :

"A heart in every thought renewed,
And full of love divine ;
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,—
A copy, Lord, of thine."

Here is, undoubtedly, an evangelical prayer for the LOVE which restores the soul to a state of sinless rest and evangelical perfection. Nor can ye wait for an answer to the prayer contained in the

preceding hymn in a more scriptural manner than by pleading "the promise of the Father" in such words as these :

"Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down;
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown!
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation;
Enter every trembling heart.

"Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast!
Let us all in thee inherit,
Let us find that second rest.
Take away our bent to sinning,
Alpha and Omega be,
End of faith, as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.

"Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy life receive,
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more thy temples leave:
Thee we would be always blessing;
Serve thee as thy hosts above;
Pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love.

"Finish, then, thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in thee:
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!"

Lift up your hands which hang down: our Aaron, our heavenly High-Priest, is near to hold them up. The spiritual Amalekites will not always prevail: our Samuel, our heavenly Prophet, is ready "to cut them and their king in pieces before the Lord. The promise is unto you." You are surely called to attain the perfection of your dispensation, although you still seem afar off. Christ, in whom that perfection centres—Christ, from whom it flows, is very near, even at the door: "Behold," says he, [and this he spake to Laodicean loiterers,] "I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open, I will come in and sup with him," upon the fruits of my grace, in their Christian perfection; and he shall sup with me upon the fruits of my glory, in their angelical and heavenly maturity.

Hear this encouraging gospel: "Ask, and you shall have; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If any of you [believers] lack wisdom—indwelling wisdom, [Christ, the wisdom and the power of God, dwelling in his heart by faith,] let him ask of God, who giveth to all men, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask [as a believer] in faith, nothing wavering; for he that

wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed; for let not that man think that he shall receive" the thing which he thus asketh. "But whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. For all things [commanded and promised] are possible to him that believeth." He who has commanded us to be perfect "in love, as our Heavenly Father is perfect," and he who has promised "speedily to avenge his elect, who cry to him night and day," he will speedily avenge you of your grand adversary, indwelling sin. He will say to you: "According to thy faith be it done unto thee; for he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think; and of his fulness we may all receive grace for grace"—we may all witness the gracious fulfilment of all the promises, which he has graciously made, that by "them we might be partakers of the Divine nature," so far as it can be communicated to mortals in this world. You see that, with men, what you look for is impossible; but you show yourselves believers; take God into the account, and you will soon experience that "with God all things are possible." Nor forget the omnipotent Advocate whom you have with him. Behold! he lifts his once-pierced hands, and says, "Father, sanctify them through [thy loving] truth, that they may

be perfected in love ;” and showing to you the fountain of atoning blood and purifying water, whence flow the streams which cleanse and gladden the hearts of believers, he says, “*Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name—whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Ask, then, that your joy may be full.*” If I try your faith by a little delay ; if I hide my face for a moment, it is only to gather you with everlasting kindness. “A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come ; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish for joy. Now ye have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” In that day ye shall ask me no question, for you shall not have my bodily presence. But my urim and thummim will be with you ; and the “*Spirit of truth will himself lead you into all [Christian] truth.*”

“O for a firm and lasting faith,
To credit all the Almighty saith,
To embrace the promise of his Son,
And feel the Comforter our own !”

In the meantime be not afraid to give glory to God by “believing in hope against hope.” Stagger not “at the promise [of the Father and the Son] through unbelief ;” but trust the power and

faithfulness of your Creator and Redeemer, till your Sanctifier has fixed his abode in your heart. Wait at mercy's door, as the lame beggar did at the beautiful gate of the temple. "Peter fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, *Look to us*; and he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something of them." Do so too: give heed to the Father in the Son, who says, "Look unto me and be ye saved." Expect to receive "the one thing *now* needful" for you—a fulness of the sanctifying Spirit; and though your patience may be tried, it shall not be disappointed. The faith and power which, at Peter's word, gave the poor cripple a perfect soundness in the presence of all the wondering Jews, will give you, at Christ's word, a perfect soundness of heart in the presence of all your adversaries.

"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And looks to that alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries, 'It shall be done!'

"Faith asks impossibilities;
Impossibilities are given:
And I—e'en I, from sin shall cease,
Shall live on earth the life of heaven."

Faith always "works by love"—by love of desire at least; making us ardently pray for what we believe to be eminently desirable. And if

Christian perfection appears so to you, you might, perhaps, express your earnest desire of it in some such words as these : How long, Lord, shall my soul, thy spiritual temple, be a den of thieves, or a house of merchandise ? How long shall vain thoughts profane it, as the buyers and sellers profaned thy temple made with human hands ? How long shall evil tempers lodge within me ? How long shall unbelief, formality, hypocrisy, envy, hankering after sensual pleasure, indifference to spiritual delights, and backwardness to painful or ignominious duty, harbor there ? How long shall these sheep and doves, yea, these goats and serpents, defile my breast, which should be pure as the holy of holies ? How long shall they hinder me from being one of the worshippers whom thou seekest—one of those who worship thee in spirit and in truth ? O help me to take away these cages of unclean birds. “ Suddenly come to thy temple.” Turn out all that offends the eyes of thy purity ; and destroy all that keeps me out of “ the rest which remains for thy *Christian* people : ” so shall I keep a spiritual Sabbath—a Christian jubilee to the God of my life. So shall I witness my share in the oil of joy with which thou anointest perfect Christians above their fellow-believers. I stand in need of that oil, Lord ; my lamp burns dim ; sometimes it seems to be even gone out, as that of the

foolish virgins; it is more like "a smoking flax" than "a burning and shining light." O! quench it not: raise it to a flame. Thou knowest that I do believe in thee. The trembling hand of my faith holds thee; and though I have ten thousand times grieved thy pardoning love, thine everlasting arm is still under me, to redeem my life from destruction; while thy right hand is over me, to crown me with mercies and loving-kindness. But, alas! I am neither sufficiently thankful for thy present mercies, nor sufficiently athirst for thy future favors. Hence I feel an aching void in my soul, being conscious that I have not attained the heights of grace described in thy word, and enjoyed by thy holiest servants. Their deep experiences, the diligence and ardor with which they did thy will, the patience and fortitude with which they endured the cross, reproach me, and convince me of my manifold wants. I want "power from on high;" I want the penetrating, lasting "unction of the Holy One." I want to have my vessel (my capacious heart) full of oil, which makes the countenance of wise virgins cheerful. I want a lamp of heavenly illumination, and a fire of Divine love, burning day and night in my breast, as the typical lamps did in the temple, and the sacred fire on the altar; I want a full application of the

blood which cleanses from all sin, and a strong faith in thy sanctifying word—a faith by which thou mayest dwell in my heart, as the unwavering hope of glory, and the fixed object of my love. I want the internal oracle—thy still, small voice, together with urim and thummim*—“the new name which none knoweth but he that receiveth it.” In a word, Lord, I want a plentitude of thy Spirit, the full promise of the Father, and the rivers which flow from the inmost souls of the believers, who have gone on to the perfection of their dispensation. I do believe that thou canst and wilt thus “baptize me with the Holy Ghost and with fire:” help my unbelief; confirm and increase my faith, with regard to this important baptism. Lord, I have need to be thus baptized of thee, and I am straitened till this baptism is accomplished. By thy baptisms of tears in the manger—of water in Jordan—of sweat in Gethsemane—of blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke, and flaming wrath on Calvary—baptize, O baptize my soul, and make as full an end of the original sin which I have from Adam, as thy last baptism made of the likeness of sinful flesh, which thou hadst from a daughter of Eve. Some of thy people look at death for full

* Two Hebrew words, which mean *lights and perfections*.

salvation from sin; but, at thy command, Lord, I look unto thee. "Say to my soul, *I am thy salvation;*" and let me feel with my heart, as well as see with my understanding, that thou canst *save* from sin, *to the uttermost, all that come to God through thee.* I am tired of forms, professions, and orthodox notions; so far as they are not pipes or channels to convey life, light, and love to my dead, dark, and stony heart. Neither the plain letter of thy gospel, nor the sweet foretastes and transient illuminations of thy Spirit, can satisfy the large desires of my faith. Give me thine abiding Spirit, that he may continually shed abroad thy love in my soul. Come, O Lord, with that blessed Spirit; come thou, and thy Father, in that holy Comforter—come to make your abode with me; or I shall go meekly mourning to my grave. Blessed mourning! Lord, increase it. I had rather wait in tears for thy fulness than wantonly waste the fragments of thy spiritual bounties, or feed with Laodicean contentment upon the tainted manna of my former experiences. Righteous Father, "I hunger and thirst after thy righteousness;" send thy Holy Spirit of promise to fill me therewith, to sanctify me throughout, and to "seal me *centrally* to the day of eternal redemption" and finished salvation. "Not for works of righteousness which I have done, but of thy mercy," for

Christ's sake, "save thou me by the *complete* washing of regeneration, and the *full* renewing of the Holy Christ." And in order to this, pour out of thy Spirit; shed it abundantly on me till the fountain of living water abundantly springs up in my soul, and I can say, in the full sense of the words, that thou "livest in me, that my life is hid with thee in God, and that my spirit is returned to him that gave it; to thee, the first and the last—my author and my end—my God and my all!"

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ADDRESS TO PERFECT CHRISTIANS.

YE have not sung the preceding hymns in vain, O ye men of God, who have mixed faith with your evangelical requests. The God who says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" the gracious God who declares, "Blessed are they that hunger after righteousness, for they shall be filled;" that faithful, covenant-keeping God has now filled you with all "righteousness, peace, and joy in believing." The brightness of Christ's appearing has destroyed the indwelling "man of sin." He who had slain the lion and the bear (he who had already done so great things for you) has now crowned all his blessings by slaying the Goliath within. Aspiring, unbelieving self is fallen before the victorious Son of David. "The quick and powerful word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword, has pierced even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." The carnal mind is

cut off; the circumcision of the heart, through the Spirit, has fully taken place in your breasts; and now "that mind is in you which was also in Christ Jesus; ye are spiritually-minded;" loving God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourselves, "ye are full of goodness, ye keep the commandments," ye observe *the law of liberty*, ye fulfil *the law of Christ*. Of him ye have "learned to be meek and lowly in heart." Ye have fully "taken his yoke upon you:" in so doing ye have found a sweet, abiding rest unto your souls; and from blessed experience ye can say: "Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." The beatitudes are sensibly yours; and the charity described by St. Paul has the same place in your breasts which the tables of the law had in the ark of the covenant. Ye are the living temples of the Trinity: the Father is your life; the Son, your light; the Spirit, your love; ye are truly baptized into the mystery of God, ye continue to "drink into one spirit," and thus ye enjoy the grace of both sacraments. There is an end of your *Lo here!* and *Lo there!* The kingdom of God is now established within you. Christ's "righteousness,

peace, and joy" are rooted in your breasts "by the Holy Ghost given unto you," as an abiding guide and indwelling comforter. Your introverted eye of faith looks at God, who gently "guides you with his eye" into all the truth necessary to make you "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God." *Simplicity of intention* keeps darkness out of your mind, and *purity of affection* keeps wrong fires out of your breast: by the former, ye are without *guile*; by the latter, ye are without *envy*. Your passive will instantly melts into the will of God; and on all occasions you meekly say, "Not my will, O Father, but thine be done!" Thus ye are always ready to suffer what ye are called to suffer. Your active will evermore says: "Speak, Lord; thy servant heareth; what wouldst thou have me to do? It is my meat and drink to do the will of my Heavenly Father!" Thus are ye always ready to do whatsoever ye are convinced that God calls you to do; and "whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat, or drink, or do any thing else, ye do all to the glory of God, and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; rejoicing evermore; praying without ceasing; in every thing giving thanks;" solemnly *looking for* and *hasting unto* the hour of your dissolution, and the "day of God, wherein the heavens, being on

fire, shall be dissolved," and your soul, being clothed with a celestial body, shall be able to do celestial services to the God of your life.

In this blessed state of Christian perfection, the holy "anointing, which ye have received of him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, unless it be as the same anointing teacheth." Agreeably, therefore, to that anointing, which teaches by a variety of means, which formerly taught a prophet by an ass, and daily instructs God's children by the ant, I shall venture to set before you some important directions which the Holy Ghost has already suggested to your pure minds; "for I would not be negligent to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance," and giving you some hints, which it is safe for you frequently to meditate upon.

I. Adam, ye know, lost his *human* perfection in Paradise; Satan lost his *angelic* perfection in heaven; the devil thrust sore at Christ in the wilderness, to throw him down from his *mediatorial* perfection; and St. Paul, in the same Epistles where he professes not only *Christian*, but *apostolic* perfection also, (Phil. iii. 15; 1 Cor. ii. 6; 2 Cor. xii. 11,) informs us that he continued to "run

for the crown of heavenly perfection" like a man who might not only lose his crown of Christian perfection, but become a reprobate, and be cast away. 1 Cor. ix. 25, 27. And, therefore, "so run *ye also*, that no man take your crown" of Christian perfection in this world, and that ye may obtain your crown of angelic perfection in the world to come. Still keep your body under. Still guard your senses. Still watch your own heart, and, "steadfast in the faith, still resist the devil, that he may flee from you;" remembering that if Christ himself, as Son of man, had conferred with flesh and blood, refused to deny himself, and avoided taking up his cross, he had lost his perfection, and sealed up our original apostasy.

"We do not find," says Mr. Wesley, in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, "any general state described in Scripture, from which a man cannot draw back to sin. If there were any state wherein this is impossible, it would be that of those who are sanctified, who are fathers in Christ, who 'rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks.' But it is not impossible for these to draw back. They who are sanctified may yet fall and perish. Heb. x. 29. Even 'fathers in Christ' need that warning, 'Love not the world.' 1 John ii. 15. They who 'rejoice, pray, and give thanks without ceasing,' may never-

theless 'quench the Spirit.' 1 Thess. v. 16, etc. Nay, even they who are 'sealed unto the day of redemption' may yet 'grieve the Holy Spirit of God.' Eph. v. 30.*

The doctrine of the absolute perseverance of the saints is the first card which the devil played against man: "Ye shall not surely die if ye break the law of your perfection." This fatal card won the game. Mankind and Paradise were lost. The artful serpent had too well succeeded at his first game to forget that lucky card at his second. See him "transforming himself into an angel of light on the pinnacle of the temple." There he plays over again his old game against the Son of God. Out of the Bible he pulls the very card which won our first parents, and swept the stake—Paradise—yea, swept it with the besom of destruction: "Cast thyself down," says he, "for it is written, [that

* We do not hereby deny that some believers have a testimony in their own breasts that they shall not finally fall from God. "They may have it," says Mr. Wesley, in the same tract, "and this persuasion that 'neither life nor death shall separate them from God,' far from being hurtful, may, in some circumstances, be extremely useful." But wherever this testimony is Divine, it is attended with that grace which inseparably connects holiness and good works, *the means*, with perseverance and eternal salvation, *the end*; and, in this respect, our doctrine widely differs from that of the Calvinists, who break the necessary connection between holiness and infallible salvation, by making room for the foulest falls—for adultery, murder, and incest.

all things shall work together for thy good; thy very falls not excepted,] *He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*" The tempter (thanks be to Christ!) lost the game at that time, but he did not lose his card; and it is probable that he will play it round against you all, only with some variation. Let me mention one among a thousand: He promised our Lord that God's "angels should bear him up in their hands, if he threw himself down;" and it is not unlikely that he will promise you greater things still. Nor should I wonder if he was bold enough to hint, that when you cast yourselves down, "God himself shall bear you up in his HANDS, yea, in his ARMS of everlasting love." O ye men of God, learn wisdom by the fall of Adam. O ye anointed sons of the Most High, learn watchfulness by the conduct of Christ. If he was afraid to "tempt the Lord his God," will ye dare to do it? If he rejected, as poison, the hook of the absolute perseverance of the saints, though it was baited with Scripture, will ye swallow it down as if it were "honey out of the rock of ages?" No; "through faith in Christ, the Scriptures have made you wise unto salvation;" you will not only flee with all speed from evil, but from the very appearance of evil; and when you stand on the brink of

a temptation, far from "entering into it," under any pretence whatever, ye will leap back into the bosom of Him who says: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; for though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak." I grant that "the weakness of the flesh" is not sin; but yet the "deceitfulness of sin" creeps in at this door; and in this way not a few of God's children, "after they had escaped the pollutions of the world, through the" sanctifying knowledge of Christ, under plausible pretences, "have been entangled again therein and overcome." Let their falls make you cautious. Ye have "put on the whole armor of God;" O keep it on, and use it "with all prayer," that ye may to the last "stand complete in Christ, and be more than conquerors through him that has loved you."

II. Remember that "every one who is perfect shall be as his Master." Now if your Master was tempted and assaulted *to the last*; if *to the last* he watched and prayed, using all the means of grace himself, and enforcing the use of them upon others; if *to the last* he fought against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and did not "put off the harness" till he had put off the body; think not yourselves above him, but "go and do likewise." If he did not regain Paradise, without going through the most complete renunciation of all the good things

of this world, and without meekly submitting to the severe stroke of his last enemy, death, be content to be "perfect as he was;" nor fancy that your flesh and blood can inherit the celestial kingdom of God, when the flesh and blood which Emmanuel himself assumed from a pure virgin, could not inherit it without passing under the cherub's flaming sword: I mean, without going through the gates of death.

III. Ye are not complete in wisdom. Perfect love does not imply perfect knowledge; but perfect humility, and perfect readiness to receive instruction. Remember, therefore, that if ever ye show that ye are above being instructed, even by a fisherman who teaches according to the Divine anointing, ye will show that ye are fallen from a perfection of humility into a perfection of pride.

IV. Do not confound angelical with Christian perfection. Uninterrupted transports of praise, and ceaseless raptures of joy, do not belong to Christian, but to angelical perfection. Our feeble frame can bear but a few drops of that glorious cup. In general, that *new wine* is too strong for our *old bottles*; that power is too excellent for our earthen, cracked vessels; but, weak as they are, they can bear a fulness of meekness, of resignation, of humility, and of that love which is willing to "obey unto death." If God indulge you

with ecstasies and extraordinary revelations, be thankful for them; but be “not exalted above measure by them;” take care lest enthusiastic delusions mix themselves with them; and remember that your Christian perfection does not so much consist in “building a tabernacle” upon Mount Tabor, to rest and enjoy rare sights there, as in resolutely taking up the cross, and following Christ to the palace of a proud Caiaphas, to the judgment-hall of an unjust Pilate, and to the top of an ignominious Calvary. Ye never read in your Bibles, “Let that glory be upon you which was also upon St. Stephen, when he looked up steadfastly into heaven, and said, *Behold! I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.*” But ye have frequently read there, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

See him on that ignominious gibbet! He hangs—abandoned by his friends—surrounded by his foes—condemned by the rich—insulted by the poor! He hangs—“a worm and no man—a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people! All that see him laugh him to scorn! They shoot out their lips and shake their heads, saying, *He*

trusted in God, that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, if he will have him!" There is none to help him: one of his apostles denies, another sells him; and the rest run away. Many oxen are come about him: fat bulls of Bashan close him on every side; they gape upon him with their mouths as it were a ramping lion; he is poured out like water; his heart in the midst of his body is like melting wax; his strength is dried up like a potsherd; his tongue cleaveth to his gums; he is going into the dust of death; many dogs are come about him; and the counsel of the wicked layeth siege against him; his hands and feet are pierced; you may tell all his bones; they stand staring and looking upon him; they part his garments among them, and cast lots for the only remains of his property, his plain, seamless vesture. Both suns, the visible and the invisible, seem eclipsed. No cheering beam of created light gilds his gloomy prospect. No smile of his Heavenly Father supports his agonizing soul! No cordial, unless it be vinegar and gall, revives his sinking spirits! He has nothing left except his God. But his God is enough for him. In his God he has all things. And though his soul is seized with sorrow, even unto death, yet it hangs more firmly upon his God by a naked faith, than his lacerated body does on the cross by the clenched nails. The perfection of his

love shines in all its Christian glory. He not only forgives his insulting foes and bloody persecutors, but, in the highest point of his passion, he forgets his own wants, and thirsts after their eternal happiness. Together with his blood, he pours out his soul for them; and, excusing them all, he says: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." O ye adult sons of God, in this glass behold all with open face the glory of your Redeemer's forgiving, praying love; and, as ye "behold it, be changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the loving Spirit of the Lord."

V. This lesson is deep; but he may teach you one deeper still. By a strong sympathy with him in all his sufferings, he may call you to "know him *every way* crucified." Stern justice thunders from heaven, "Awake, O sword, against the man who is my fellow!" The sword awakes; the sword goes through his soul; the flaming sword is quenched in his blood. But is one sinew of his perfect faith cut, one fibre of his perfect resignation injured by the astonishing blow? No; his God slays him, and yet he trusts in his God. By the noblest of all ventures, in the most dreadful of all storms, he meekly bows his head, and shelters his departing soul in the bosom of his God. "*My God, my God!*" says he, "though all my comforts have forsaken me, and all thy storms

and waves go over me, yet 'into thy hands I commend my spirit. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand [where I shall soon sit] there are pleasures for evermore.'” What a pattern of perfect confidence! O ye perfect Christians, be ambitious to ascend to those amazing heights of Christ's perfection; for hereunto are ye called; because Christ also suffered for us; leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps; who knew no sin; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” If this is your high calling on earth, rest not, O ye fathers in Christ, till your patient hope and perfect confidence in God have got their last victory over your last enemy—the king of terrors.

“The ground of a thousand mistakes,” says Mr. Wesley, “is the not considering deeply that love is the highest gift of God, *humble, gentle, patient love*; that all visions, revelations, manifestations whatever, are little things compared to love. It were well you should be thoroughly sensible of this: the heaven of heavens is love. There is nothing higher in religion; there is, in effect,

nothing else. If you look for any thing but more love, you are looking wide of the mark, you are getting out of the royal way. And when you are asking others, 'Have you received this or that blessing?' if you mean any thing but *more love*, you mean wrong; you are leading them out of the way, and putting them upon a false scent. Settle it, then, in your heart, that from the moment God has saved you from all sin, you are to aim at nothing *but more of that love* described in the thirteenth of the Corinthians. You can go no higher than this till you are carried into Abraham's bosom."

VI. Love is humble. "Be therefore clothed with humility," says Mr. Wesley; "let it not only fill, but cover you all over. Let modesty and self-diffidence appear in all your words and actions. Let all you speak and do show that you are little, and base, and mean, and vile, in your own eyes. As one instance of this, be always ready to own any fault you have been in. If you have, at any time, thought, spoke, or acted wrong, be not backward to acknowledge it. Never dream that this will hurt the cause of God: no, it will further it. Be therefore open and frank when you are taxed with any thing; let it appear just as it is; and you will thereby not hinder, but adorn the gospel." Why should ye be more backward

in acknowledging your failings, than in confessing that ye do not pretend to infallibility? St. Paul was perfect in the love which casts out fear, and therefore he boldly reprov'd the high-priest; but when he had reprov'd him more sharply than the fifth commandment allows, he directly confessed his mistake, and set his seal to the importance of the duty in which he had been inadvertently wanting. Then Paul said: "I knew not, brethren, that he was the high-priest; for it is written, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.*" St. John was perfect in the courteous, humble love which brings us down at the feet of all. His courtesy, his humility, and the dazzling glory which beamed forth from a Divine messenger (whom he apprehended to be more than a creature) betrayed him into a fault contrary to that of St. Paul; but, far from concealing it, he openly confessed it, and published his confession for the edification of all the Churches. "When I had heard and seen," says he, "I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, *See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant.*" Christian perfection shines as much in the childlike simplicity with which the perfect readily acknowledge their faults, as it does in the manly steadiness with which they "resist unto blood, striving against sin."

VII. If humble love makes us frankly confess our faults, much more does it incline us to own ourselves sinners, miserable sinners before that God whom we have so frequently offended. I need not remind you that your "bodies are dead because of sin." You see, you feel it, and therefore, so long as you dwell in a prison of flesh and blood, which death, the avenger of sin, is to pull down; so long as your final justification, as pardoned and sanctified sinners, has not taken place; it is meet, right, and your bounden duty to consider yourselves as sinners, who, as having been transgressors of the law of innocence and the law of liberty, are guilty of death—of eternal death. St. Paul did so after he was "come to Mount Zion, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." He still looked upon himself as the chief of sinners, because he had been a daring blasphemer of Christ, and a fierce persecutor of his people. "Christ," says he, "came to save sinners, of whom I am chief." The reason is plain. Matter of fact is, and will be, matter of fact to all eternity. According to the doctrines of grace and justice, and before the throne of God's mercy and holiness, a sinner pardoned and sanctified must, in the very nature of things, be considered as a sinner; for if you consider him as a saint absolutely abstracted from the character of a sinner, how can he be a

pardoned and sanctified sinner? To all eternity, therefore, but much more while death (the wages of sin) is at your heels, and while ye are going to “appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive” your final sentence of absolution or condemnation, it will become you to say with St. Paul: “We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely [as sinners] by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ;” although we are justified JUDICIALLY *as believers*, through faith; *as obedient believers*, through the obedience of faith; and *as perfect Christians*, through Christian perfection.

VIII. Humble love “becomes all things [but sin] to all men,” although it delights most in those who are most holy. Ye may and ought to set your love of peculiar complacence upon God’s dearest children—upon “those who excel in virtue;” because they more strongly reflect the image of “the God of love, the Holy One of Israel.” But, if ye despise the weak, and are above lending them a helping hand, ye are fallen from Christian perfection, which teaches us to “bear one another’s burdens,” especially the burdens of the weak. Imitate, then, the tenderness and wisdom of the good Shepherd, who “carries the lambs in his bosom, gently leads the sheep which are big with young,” feeds with milk those who cannot bear

strong meat, and says to his imperfect disciples :
“I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now.”

IX. “Where the *loving* Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Keep, therefore, at the utmost distance from the shackles of a narrow, prejudiced, bigoted spirit. The moment ye confine your love to the people who think just as you do, and your regard for the preachers who exactly suit your taste, you fall from perfection and turn bigots. “I entreat you,” says Mr. Wesley, in his *Plain Account*, “beware of bigotry. Let not your love, or beneficence, be confined to *Methodists* (so called) only ; much less to that very small part of them who seem to be renewed in love ; or to those who believe yours and their report. O make not this your Shibboleth.” On the contrary, as ye have time and ability, “do good to all men.” Let your benevolence shine upon all ; let your charity send its cherishing beams toward all, in proper degrees. So shall ye be perfect as your Heavenly Father, “who makes his sun to shine upon all ;” although he sends the brightest and warmest beams of his favor upon “the household of faith,” and reserves his richest bounties for those who lay out their five talents to the best advantage.

X. Love, pure love, is satisfied with the Supreme Good—with God. “Beware, then, of desiring any

thing but him. Now you desire nothing else. Every other desire is driven out: see that none enter in again. 'Keep thyself pure; let your eye *remain* single, and your whole body shall remain full of light.' 'O stand fast in the liberty where-with Christ hath made you free!' Be patterns to all, of denying yourselves, and taking up your cross daily. Let them see that you make no account of any pleasure which does not bring you nearer to God, nor regard any pain which does; that you simply aim at pleasing him, whether by doing or suffering; that the constant language of your heart with regard to pleasure or pain, honor or dishonor, is,

" 'All's alike to me, so I
In my Lord may live and die!'"

XI. The best soldiers are sent upon the most difficult and dangerous expeditions; and as you are the best soldiers of Jesus Christ, ye will probably be called to drink deepest of his cup and to carry the heaviest burdens. "Expect contradiction and opposition," says the judicious divine just quoted, "together with crosses of various kinds. Consider the words of St. Paul, 'To you it is given in behalf of Christ,' for his sake, as a fruit of his death and intercession for you, 'not only to believe, but also to suffer for his sake.' Phil. i. 23. *It is*

given! God *gives* you this opposition or reproach: it is a fresh token of his love. And will you disown the giver? Or spurn his gift and count it a misfortune? Will you not rather say: 'Father, the hour is come, that thou shouldst be glorified. Now thou givest thy child to suffer something for thee. Do with me according to thy will.' Know that these things, far from being *hindrances* to the work of God, or to your souls, unless by your own fault, are not only unavoidable in the course of Providence, but *profitable*, yea, *necessary*, for you. Therefore receive them from God (not from chance) with willingness and thankfulness. Receive them from men with humility, meekness, yieldingness, gentleness, sweetness."

Love can never do nor suffer too much for its Divine object. Be then ambitious, like St. Paul, to be made perfect in *sufferings*. I have already observed that the apostle, not satisfied to be a perfect Christian, would also be a perfect martyr; earnestly desiring to "know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings." Follow him, as he followed his suffering, crucified Lord. Your feet "are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;" run after them both, in the race of obedience, for the crown of martyrdom, if that crown is reserved for you. And if ye miss the crown of those who are martyrs in *deed*, ye shall, however, receive the

reward of those who are martyrs in *intention*—the crown of righteousness and angelical perfection.

XII. But do not so desire to follow Christ to the garden of Gethsemane as to refuse following him *now* to the carpenter's shop, if Providence *now* call you to it. Do not lose the *present day* by idly looking back at *yesterday*, or foolishly antedating the cares of *to-morrow*; but wisely use every hour; spending it as one who stands on the verge of time, on the border of eternity, and one who has his work cut out by a wise Providence from moment to moment. Never, therefore, neglect using the two talents you have *now*, and doing the duty which is *now* incumbent upon you. Should ye be tempted to it under the plausible pretence of waiting for a great number of talents, remember that God doubles our talents in the way of duty, and that it is a maxim, advanced by Elisha Coles himself, "Use grace and have [more] grace." Therefore, "to continual watchfulness and prayer, add continual employment," says Mr. Wesley, "for grace flies a vacuum as well as nature: the devil fills whatever God does not fill." "*As by works faith is made perfect*, so the completing or destroying of the work of faith, and enjoying the favor or suffering the displeasure of God, greatly depend on every single act of obedience." If you forget this, you will hardly do *now* whatsoever your hand

findeth to do. Much less will you do it with *all* your might, for God, for eternity.

XIII. Love is modest: it rather inclines to bashfulness and silence, than to talkative forwardness. "In a multitude of words, there wanteth not sin;" be therefore "slow to speak;" nor cast your pearls before those who cannot distinguish them from pebbles. Nevertheless, when you are solemnly called upon to bear testimony to the truth, and to say "what great things God has done for you," it would be cowardice, or false prudence, not to do it with humility. Be then "always ready to give an answer to every man who [properly] asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness [without fluttering anxiety] and with fear," [with a reverential awe of God upon your minds.] 1 Peter iii. 15. Perfect Christians are "burning and shining lights," and our Lord intimates that, as "a candle is not lighted to be put under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may give light to all the house," so God does not light the candle of perfect love to hide it in a corner, but to give light to all those who are within the reach of its brightness. If diamonds glitter, if stars shine, if flowers display their colors, and perfumes diffuse their fragrance, to the honor of the Father of lights, and Author of every good gift; if, without self-seeking, they disclose his

glory to the utmost of their power, why should "ye not go and do likewise?" Gold answers its most valuable end when it is brought to light, and made to circulate for charitable and pious uses; and not when it lies concealed in a miser's strong-box, or in the dark bosom of a mine. But when you lay out your spiritual gold for proper uses, beware of imitating the vanity of those coxcombs who, as often as they are about to pay for a trifle, pull out a handful of gold, merely to make a show of their wealth.

XIV. Love or "charity rejoiceth in the [display of an edifying] truth." Fact is fact, all the world over. If you can say to the glory of God that *you are alive, and feel very well*, when it is so, why should you not also testify to his honor that you "live not, but that Christ liveth in you," if you really find that this is your experience? Did not St. John say: "Our love is made perfect, because as he is, so are we in this world?" Did not St. Paul write: "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk after the Spirit?" Did he not, with the same simplicity, aver, that although "he had nothing and was sorrowful, yet he possessed all things, and was always rejoicing?"

Hence it appears that, with respect to the declaring or concealing what God has done for your soul, the line of your duty runs exactly between

the proud forwardness of some stiff Pharisees, and *the voluntary humility* of some stiff mystics. The former vainly boast of more than they experience, and thus set up the cursed idol SELF: the latter ungratefully hide "the wonderful works of God," which the primitive Christians spoke of publicly in a variety of languages; and so refuse to exalt their gracious benefactor, CHRIST. The first error is undoubtedly more odious than the second; but what need is there of leaning to either? Would ye avoid them both? Let your tempers and lives always declare that perfect love is attainable in this life. And when you have a proper call to declare it with your lips and pens, do it without forwardness, to the glory of God; do it with simplicity, for the edification of your neighbor; do it with godly jealousy, lest ye should show the treasures of Divine grace in your hearts with the same *self-complacence* with which King Hezekiah showed his treasures, and the golden vessels of the temple, to the ambassadors of the King of Babylon, remembering what a dreadful curse this piece of vanity pulled down upon him: "And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord: *Behold, the days come, that all that is in thy house shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord.*" If God so severely punished Hezekiah's pride, how properly does St. Peter

charge believers to “give with fear an account of the grace which is in them!” and how careful should ye be to observe this important charge!

XV. If you will keep at the utmost distance from the vanity which proved so fatal to good King Hezekiah, follow an excellent direction of Mr. Wesley. When you have done any thing for God, or received any favor from him, retire, if not into your *closet*, into your *heart*, and say: “I come, Lord, to restore to thee what thou hast given, and I freely relinquish it, to enter again into my own nothingness. For what is the most perfect creature in heaven or earth in thy presence, but a void, capable of being filled with thee and by thee, as the air, which is void and dark, is capable of being filled with the light of the sun? Grant, therefore O Lord, that I may never appropriate thy grace to myself, any more than the air appropriates to itself the light of the sun which withdraws it every day to restore it the next; there being nothing in the air that either appropriates his light or resists it. O give me the same facility of receiving and restoring thy grace and good works! I say thine, for I acknowledge that the root from which they spring is in thee, and not in me.” “The true means to be filled anew with the riches of grace is thus to strip ourselves of it; without this, it is extremely difficult not to faint in the

practice of good works." "And, therefore, that your good works may receive their last perfection, let them lose themselves in God. This is a kind of death to them, resembling that of our bodies, which will not attain their highest life, their immortality, till they lose themselves in the glory of our souls, or rather of God, where-with they shall be filled. And it is only what they had of earthly and mortal, which good works lose by this spiritual death."

XVI. Would ye see this deep precept put in practice? Consider St. Paul. Already possessed of Christian perfection, he does good works from morning till night. He warns every one night and day with tears. He carries the gospel from east to west. Wherever he stops, he plants a Church at the hazard of his life. But instead of resting in his present perfection, and in the good works which spring from it, "he grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;" unweariedly "following after, if that he may apprehend that [perfection] for which also he is apprehended of Christ Jesus"—that celestial perfection of which he got lively ideas when he was "caught up to the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter." With what amazing ardor does he run his race of Christian

perfection for the prize of that higher perfection ! How does he forget the works of yesterday, when he lays himself out for God to-day ! “ Though dead, he yet speaketh ; ” nor can an address to perfect Christians be closed by a more proper speech than his. “ Brethren,” says he, “ be followers of me—I count not myself to have apprehended [my evangelical perfection ;] but this one thing I do : forgetting those things which are behind, [settling in none of my former experiences, resting in none of my good works,] and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the [celestial] prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded ; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” In the meantime you may sing the following hymn of the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley, which is descriptive of the destruction of corrupt self-will, and expressive of the absolute resignation which characterizes a perfect believer :

“ To do, or not to do ; to have,
Or not to have, I leave to thee :
To be or not to be, I leave :
Thy only will be done in me !
All my requests are lost in one,
‘ Father, thy only will be done ! ’

“ Suffice that for the season past,
Myself in things Divine I sought;
For comforts cried with eager haste,
And murmured that I found them not:
I leave it now to thee alone,
‘ Father, thy only will be done!’

“ Thy gifts I clamor for no more,
Or selfishly thy grace require,
An evil heart to varnish o’er:
Jesus, the Giver, I desire,
After the flesh no longer known:
‘ Father, thy only will be done!’

“ Welcome alike the crown or cross,
Trouble I cannot ask, nor peace,
Nor toil, nor rest, nor gain, nor loss,
Nor joy, nor grief, nor pain, nor ease,
Nor life, nor death; but ever groan,
‘ Father, thy only will be done!’ ”

This hymn suits all the believers who are at the bottom of Mount Zion, and begin to join “the spirits of just men made perfect.” But when the triumphal chariot of perfect love *gloriously* carries you to the top of perfection’s hill; when you are raised far above the *common* heights of the perfect; when you are almost translated into glory like Elijah, then you may sing another hymn of the same Christian poet:

“ Who in Jesus confide,
They are bold to outride
All the storms of affliction beneath;
With the prophet they soar
To that heavenly shore,
And outfly all the arrows of death.

“By faith we are come
To our permanent home;
And by hope we the rapture improve:
By love we still rise,
And look down on the skies—
For the heaven of heavens is love!

“Who on earth can conceive
How happy we live
In the city of God, the great King?
What a concert of praise,
When our Jesus's grace
The whole heavenly company sing!

“What a rapturous song,
When the glorified throng
In the spirit of harmony join!
Join all the glad choirs,
Hearts, voices, and lyres,
And the burden is mercy Divine!”

But when you cannot follow on to those rapturous heights of perfection, you need not give up your shield. You may still rank among the perfect, if you can heartily join in this version of Psalm cxxxi.:

“Lord, thou dost the grace impart!
Poor in spirit, meek in heart,
I shall as my Master be,
Rooted in humility.

“Now, dear Lord, that thee I know,
Nothing will I seek below,
Aim at nothing great or high,
Lowly both in heart and eye.

“Simple, teachable, and mild,
Awed into a little child,
Quiet now without my food,
Weaned from every creature good.

“Hangs my new-born soul on thee,
Kept from all idolatry;
Nothing wants beneath, above,
Resting in thy perfect love.”

That your earthen vessels may be filled with this love till they break, and you enjoy the Divine object of your faith without an interposing veil of gross flesh and blood, is the wish of one who sincerely praises God on your account, and ardently prays :

“Make up thy jewels, Lord, and show
The glorious, spotless Church below :
The fellowship of saints make known ;
And O ! my God, might I be one !

“O might my lot be cast with these,
The least of Jesus’ witnesses !
O that my Lord would count me meet
To wash his dear disciples’ feet !

“To wait upon his saints below !
On gospel errands for them go !
Enjoy the grace to angels given ;
And serve the royal heirs of heaven !”

APPENDIX I.

REFERRING TO FLETCHER'S CHECKS, VOL. II., P. 498, OF
THE EDITION PUBLISHED BY THE METHODIST EPIS-
COPAL CHURCH AT NEW YORK.

ALL allusion to the doctrine here taught by Mr. Fletcher is excluded for the following reasons :

1. His words apparently, if not expressly, imply that God has given two distinct laws to the human race—laws totally differing in their requirements—which are here distinguished as, (1.) The Adamic or Paradisiacal law of innocence. (2.) The evangelical law of Christ, the law of liberty, or the law of love.

Now, we find nothing in the Scriptures, in the attributes of the Deity, or in the fitness of things, to warrant such a distinction. On the other hand, the Scriptures plainly imply, while reason broadly affirms, a contradiction.

God being holy, righteous, and immutable, we cannot conceive, constituted as we are, that his laws can be mere arbitrary enactments, "alterable at every suggestion of a capricious temper." "My ways are equal." "I am the Lord. I change not: the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And if he does not change, how can the laws by which he governs the moral and intelligent of his universe be so easily altered? Is not his intellect sufficiently generalizing to originate a code comprehensive enough to embrace all possible cases,

and to suit all combinations of circumstances? Are there not certain great general principles from which flows all Divine legislation? Or can we rightly suppose one set of principles to control the legislation adapted to one part of the moral universe, and a totally different set to preside over the enactment of laws for another part? Or can we, with more reason, credit the notion that a change of circumstances can effect a change in the moral principles by which any part is governed? If so, what would become of uniformity in the Divine attributes? Is, then, "the Lord our God one Lord?" Again, we would ask, what useful purpose could such a change subserve? We can imagine none; while our confidence in the Divine government would thereby be immensely weakened.

There is but one principle, so far as we know, at the foundation of all Divine legislation, and that is in the very nature of God. "God is love," is the fountain of all law. And there is but one law. "Thou shalt love," comprehends all commandments. Love is the table on which the law is engraven: on one side, love to God; on the other, love to man. "On these hang *all* the law;" and we suspect that no diversity of circumstances can make the least change in this; whilst they might suggest and desiderate an innumerable multiplicity of modifications.

In the original enunciation of the law to our race, there was no provision made for transgression except its penalty. "Do this, or thou shalt die," comprehends all the mercy contemplated in the law, either before or since the fall. The fact that

mercy has interposed a victim to bear the penalty of its violation, does not at all affect the nature of the law itself, but rather proves its inflexibility.

“But the Adamic law offered no repentance.” True; and of what avail, if it had? for repentance is useless, except as a preparative for the exercise of faith, and faith is necessary only as the door through which Christ may enter the heart. Christ was not needed before man fell; and when he did come, so far from intending to destroy the law that he might introduce a substitute or a modification, he expressly declares that he “came to fulfil it,” himself and in his members, by example and by precept. So, then, the availability of repentance and faith does not argue a change in the law, but only that infinite mercy has satisfied Divine justice with regard to at least one class of transgressors.

It can easily be shown, by reference to various passages in the works of Mr. Fletcher, that this is all, or the most, that he intends by this distinction, and that his words consequently imply what he did not intend.

2. We see no good that can result from the retention of this doctrine, and of allusions to it in this work. It is utterly useless to the argument, and, therefore, if true, ought to be discarded. Besides, from its futility it subjects the whole argument to attack.

3. Nothing which seems to be so well calculated to mislead the reader and to inculcate error, especially if pregnant with mischief, or hurtful to the argument, ought to be introduced into this work, or retained in it.

APPENDIX II.

REFERRING TO PAGE 646 OF THE "CHECKS."

THE reasons which have determined the displacement of this extract from Mr. Wesley are the following :

1. One passage in the omitted extract—"To this confidence there needs to be added one thing more, the Divine evidence and conviction that he doeth it"—has, by misapprehension, been the occasion of no little mischief. Many, imagining themselves accurate judges of the extent and sincerity of their own faith, have wrought themselves into the persuasion that they were actually exercising just the required kind and degree of faith; and, without waiting for the sealing of the witnessing Spirit, have professed Christian perfection, much to the subsequent scandal of the doctrine.

2. We seriously doubt the correctness of the doctrine inculcated in this extract. We cannot conceive that any divinely inspired teaching can be adverse to a necessity of our nature. Can we be divinely convinced that a work is wrought *before* it is done? Does not faith necessarily precede that of which it is the condition? But faith is the condition of sanctification: how, then, can it be preceded by the work?

3. Must not the Spirit of God first testify that the work is done before we can be *divinely convinced* of it? But that Spirit cannot testify to what is *not* done; that is, he cannot testify to our sanctification before we exercise faith, the previously required condition of the work.

4. The text—Mark xi. 22—which has been adduced in support of this passage from our author, and which he evidently had in mind at the time he penned it, cannot be reasonably interpreted so as to involve such absurdities as we have just noticed. We certainly cannot make strict application, in every respect, of that *miraculous* faith which was granted to the apostles, to the ordinary experience of the children of God in attaining the stated blessings of the gospel. Such a course would lead to many wild extravagances. May not this passage be among the number of that peculiar kind? But the rejection of this interpretation does not devolve upon us the necessity of presenting a correct exposition.

APPENDIX III.

REFERRING TO PARAGRAPH "X." ON PAGE 664 OF THE
"CHECKS."

WE give below the reasons for omitting a passage from this paragraph :

It is granted that the use of the good things of this life as the source of our happiness, in lieu of the love, joy, and peace which result from communion with God, would inevitably interrupt our union with him. But how is it possible that the enjoyment of the blessings of Divine Providence, when attended by earnest gratitude to God, should, in any degree, alienate our affections from him? Does not the enjoyment superadded to those things which are indispensable to our existence, which, of necessity, afford us pleasure, rather cause the holy heart to love him more, and, hence, to have closer communion with him? Is not the refusal to partake of and enjoy these blessings, for fear of their injuring our spiritual interests, an imputation upon the wisdom and goodness of our kind Creator and Provider? Again: Money may be used so as to glorify God. May I not, in humble resignation to his will, desire it that I may use it to this purpose, and yet be innocent of covetousness? What harm is there in following Solomon's advice to desire a good name, that I may lay my reputation at the foot of the cross?

We behold a beauteous landscape, and through it look, with admiring praise, to nature's God: what is there in this discordant with love to the God of nature and of grace; or with a perfect control of our moral faculties in accordance with the leadings of the Holy Spirit? Or why should a glorious sunset, or a piece of sculpture or painting, which represents the works of our Heavenly Father, produce a more unhappy effect?

St. Paul, treating another phase of this subject, says: "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. To the pure, all things are pure." 1 Tim. iv. 4.

All concede that a man should love and provide for his wife and family; that he who does not "hath denied the faith, and is confessedly worse than an infidel." Yet how is it possible for a right-minded man to do this, and not find in it a high state of pleasure?

From these considerations we conclude that,

1. The advice contained in the expunged extract is not necessary to maintain the highest spirituality.

2. It apparently implicates the wisdom of our Creator.

3. It seems to be opposed to the plain letter of the Scriptures. And,

4. It is seemingly inconsistent with some of our highest obligations.

THE END.



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